

THE FRENCH SOURCES OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE ROMANCE

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I, William Raymond Johnston Barron, declare that the following dissertation has been composed by me, that the research of which it is a record has been carried out by me, and that the dissertation has not been accepted in any previous application for a Degree.

For the purposes of the present dissertation I was admitted as a Research Student in the University of St. Andrews in October 1950. During the academic session 1950-51 I carried out full-time research in Yale University, U.S.A., and during the session 1951-52 in the University of Strasbourg, France. Since that time the work has been continued on a part-time basis and I have been credited with nine terms of higher study and research.

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CERTIFICATE OF SUPERVISOR

I certify that William Raymond Johnston Barron has spent nine terms in higher study and research in the field of Medieval English Literature and Language, that he has fulfilled the conditions of Ordinance No. LXXIX of the University Court, and that he is qualified to submit the following dissertation in application for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE FRENCH SOURCES OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE ROMANCE

Being a dissertation

presented by

W.R.J. BARRETT, M.A., B.Phil.

To the University of St. Andrews
in application for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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CONTENTS

	Page
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3 - 8
<u>CHAPTER I: THE FRENCH SOURCES OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE</u>	9 - 17
<u>CHAPTER II: WILLIAM OF PALERME</u>	78-153
<u>CHAPTER III: CHEVALERE ASSIGNE</u>	154-225
<u>CHAPTER IV: JOSEPH OF ARAMATHIS</u>	226-297
<u>CHAPTER V: GOLACRUS AND GAWAIN</u>	298-409
<u>CHAPTER VI: SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT</u>	410-466
<u>CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION</u>	467-525
<u>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	526-533

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the following dissertation is to study the Middle English alliterative romances known or believed to be based upon French sources, in order to determine, as exactly as circumstances permit, the methods adopted by their authors in re-shaping and reinterpreting French material to conform to their own tastes and interests and those of a contemporary English audience. The thesis is intended as a contribution to the study of French influence upon Middle English literature in general, of the relation of the alliterative school to contemporary English poetry in other forms, and of the distinctive nature of alliterative romance. In addition to these basic themes, it is hoped to suggest answers to a number of subsidiary questions: did the authors of alliterative romance make use of French sources more or less frequently than non-alliterative poets of the same period?; where they used such sources, were they dependent upon them to a greater or lesser degree than their contemporaries?; to what extent were they sensitive to the artistic influence of French romance and to the social concepts expressed there?; can the use of the alliterative medium be associated with a particular audience, whose tastes and interests differed from those of other Middle English readers? It is hoped, also, that the study of individual redactions from French

4
sources may add something to our knowledge of the redactive process in Middle English literature as a whole, a subject upon which many generalizations have been made, not always supported by the evidence of specific examples.

A project of this kind implies a contrast between the alliterative redactions of French romance and those in other media based upon material from the same sources. The function of the opening chapter is to provide the necessary basis for such a comparison by summarising received opinion -in so far as it has been formulated- on the relation of Middle English to French romance. This has involved consideration of relevant aspects of the general literary situation in England following the Norman Conquest, of the nature, range and variety of French romance, the character of the redactive process by which the Middle English romances were produced, and the distinctions between these and the alliterative romances which have so far been pointed out. These are topics upon which there is much uncertainty and difference of opinion, and the survey given here has been designed to reflect a wide range of views, consistent with the scope of the dissertation.

The body of the thesis is devoted to the study of individual alliterative redactions based upon French sources. It was originally intended to include all alliterative works derived from French originals, but it was found that the study of individual redactions, and even the identification of their sources, was not yet sufficiently advanced to make possible a comprehensive survey within reasonable limits of space. The scope of the examination has therefore been limited to the romances, and to those alliterative examples whose French origin has been determined with sufficient certainty to provide a

reasonable basis for the analysis of the redactive process. To these has been added Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, since, although the question of a French source remains undecided in this case, the various investigations so far made have thrown interesting side-lights on the creative process and the contrast with Middle English romance in general is particularly significant.

In each of these individual studies the intent has been to survey the evidence as to source previously produced, to determine as far as possible the original of the alliterative romance, and to identify the form which approximates most closely to that used by the redactor. On the basis of this --and, where necessary, other representative forms-- the relationship between original and translation has been examined in detail, with the object of demonstrating the process involved in the production of the alliterative version, the selection, ordering and interpretation of source-matter, and the technical conduct of the redaction. It was hoped that, in so far as the surviving texts can be assumed to represent the work of individual redactors, such an analysis would throw light on their methods of composition, literary aims and creative ability, and illustrate the tastes and interests of the audiences for whom they worked.

The nature and scope of the examination in each case has been varied according to individual circumstances. No distinction has been made between the various romances on grounds of literary quality or historical importance, since it was felt that even a clumsy or unsuccessful redaction might provide valuable evidence of the aims and methods of alliterative authors. In the case of two poems, Joseph of Aramathie and Chevaliers Assigne, both brief and rather inexpert examples, the nature of the redactive process, involving much omission,

rearrangement and re-casting of material, has required a more detailed treatment than is justified by the quality of the product. The analysis of original and redaction in parallel sections is designed to demonstrate the process of composition, even where it was a mechanical rather than a creative process. In the case of Golagrus and Gawain such a minute analysis is justified both by the technical complexity of the redaction and by the important and distinctive product. The comparatively timid and unoriginal nature of the redaction and the existence of an earlier examination made such an analysis of William of Palerne unnecessary, and it has been replaced by a more general summary and illustration of the redactive process. Neither analysis nor illustration was possible in the case of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, where lack of agreement as to source and the absence of any feasible original necessarily restricts discussion. It seemed, however, possible, by reviewing the various theories as to the origin of the poem and considering what would be involved in creating the existing version from sources of the kind indicated, to distinguish what is original in Sir Gawain from the traditional components of romance. The results are, inevitably, limited and imprecise, but not, perhaps, less valid than the more sweeping conclusions sometimes based upon a dogmatic identification of source.

The order of these detailed studies is roughly chronological but, in view of the very inexact dating of the romances, they have been grouped on the basis of their relation to the general theme of the dissertation. Without wishing to anticipate the Conclusion, the chapters have been arranged to show an increasing maturity and control in the conduct of the alliterative redactions. The first poem, William of Palerne, exemplifies a timid, conservative type of redaction, adhering

7
closely to the original, while Chevaliers Assigne and Joseph of Arimathe show courageous, if largely unsuccessful, attempts to deal independently with French material. Golagrus and Gawain, much later in date, suggests a fundamental process of redaction, designed to produce a romance very different in conception from the original, which yet succeeds within its own criteria. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has been considered last, partly in view of the light thrown upon it by the redactions from known French sources, partly because, whether or not it derives from a French original, it displays in a fully developed form features characteristic of the alliterative romances, which appear sporadically and to a limited degree in the other examples considered here.

For illustrative purposes it has been necessary to quote extensively both from the redactions and from their sources. In citing the alliterative poems, a definitive edition of each has been selected, from which the text is reproduced throughout. For the sake of uniformity the idiosyncrasies of the various editors have been ignored, lines have been given with initial capitals and without the caesura in all cases. The editors' indications of doubtful words and letters and of variant forms have also been ignored in the interests of textual clarity. In the case of the Latin and French texts involved, where a modern edition exists the editor's presentation of his text has been accepted, while material from early printed texts and manuscripts has been given, according to modern editorial practice, with the minimum of diacritical apparatus.

The preparation of a dissertation of this kind inevitably involves reference to a wide range of studies and reference works. The Select Bibliography given here has, however, been confined to works cited or referred to in the thesis, with the exception of those listed

as Bibliographies and Works of Reference. In the opening chapter, which is concerned with the opinions of individual scholars, references are given in full on each occasion, elsewhere in abbreviated form only, subsequent to the first occurrence within a particular chapter.

In presenting this dissertation I wish to record my gratitude to those who have directed my work upon it and given me generously of their time and their knowledge: to the late Professor R.J.Menner, who directed my research at Yale; to the late Professor Ernest Hoepffner, under whom I worked at Strasbourg; and, in particular, to Dr.J.P.Oakden of the University of St.Andrews, who has guided the project throughout with unfailing patience and helpfulness.

CHAPTER I

THE FRENCH SOURCES OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE

The question of the interrelations of French and English romance during the Middle Ages is part of the wider issue of literary relations between the two countries in the centuries following the Norman Conquest. Opinions on this, as on all aspects of English life during the period, show the most extreme divergence, ranging from a conception of the Conquest as a cultural cataclysm in which English literature and even the English language were swept away and replaced by French, to a virtual denial that it had any literary influence whatever.

Que devient l'anglais? Obscur, méprisé, on ne l'entend plus que dans la bouche des franeklins dégradés, des outlaws de la forêt, des porchere, des payans, de la basse classe. On ne l'écrit plus ou on ne l'écrit guère.... Les gens qui ont assez de loisir et de sécurité pour lire ou écrire, sont Français; c'est pour lui que l'on invente et qu'on compose; la littérature s'accommode toujours au goût de ceux qui peuvent la goûter et la payer. Même les Anglais se travaillent pour écrire en français....
(H. Taine, Histoire de la littérature anglaise, Vol. I, Paris, 1863, pp. 106-7.)

For it must never be forgotten - though it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that it has seldom been remembered - that France had little or no literature to give England, and that what she had (a chanson de geste or two, and some verse sainte-lives rather less far-fetched than England's own) were things of little importance and less influence. It is

an available but entirely unhistorical imagination to suggest that French literature was brought to England by the conquest. There was little or none to bring....

(G. Saintsbury, A Short History of English Literature, 5th. ed., London, 1937, pp. 30-31.)

These are extreme judgements upon limited aspects of the subject. The gradual accumulation of knowledge on the period as a whole has made possible a more balanced estimate of the literary repercussions of the Conquest, and something approaching received opinion has begun to emerge. One result of advancing research has been, without minimizing the ultimate importance of French influence, to modify earlier views of the immediate effect of the Norman invasion. It has been emphasized that the events of 1066 brought no abrupt change in the English literary tradition, no overnight substitution of French culture.

Undoubtedly the comparatively little evidence which still exists does suggest that the transition from Old to Middle English, in both literature and language, was a gradual development and not the sudden change introduced by a conquering army, which it is sometimes presumed to be.

(R. L. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 290.)

English culture had been exposed to French influence even before the Conquest took place, ⁽¹⁾ but the ultimate importance of the settlement lay, not in the limited Norman contribution to English literature, ⁽²⁾ but in

1) "The invasion of English literature by French influence did not begin on the autumn day that new Harold's levies defeated by Norman archers on the slopes of Senlac. It had begun in the time of Edward the Confessor, who was the grandson of a Norman duke and had spent his years of exile in Normandy" (G. Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1941, p. 18.)

Such influence was admittedly slight and difficult to detect. See H. J. Chaytor, From Scriptor to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Literature, Cambridge, 1945, p. 2, and R. L. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, pp. 6-9.

2) "The Normans were not apostles of culture, and very little of the vernacular literature of France was transplanted to English soil at the Conquest" (G. Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1941, p. 18.)

the extension of that influence as a result of the enduring political connection established between England and France.

There is a fact too often forgotten by students of English writing and even of English history. It is that until Chaucer's time England was only a portion of the King of England's dominions; the rest was on the Continent, in France.

This fact of the oneness of England and much of France is of very great importance to early English literature. The court and official tongue, and, in a large degree, the literary language, of England were in any case French. The intercourse between England and the langue d'oïl, and (though less continued) between England and the langue d'oc, was, moreover, intimate and frequent. The writers and minstrels were, in a considerable measure, common to England and to both northern and southern France.

The channels of communication were constantly open, and the current flowing and obbing through.

(T.G. Tucker, The Foreign Debt of English Literature, London, 1907, p. 142.)

It was not until the Twelfth century, when the Conquest had matured into a political union in which England was the dominant member, that intercommunion between the two cultures became fully operative.⁽¹⁾

That the literary interchange was so largely one-sided was due to the undoubted pre-eminence of French literature, which, just at this period, experienced a renaissance whose repercussions were felt far beyond the national frontiers.

French literature in the twelfth century had burst suddenly into flower and was enjoying one of its great periods. It was the leading literature of Europe, rich and varied in theme, polite and urbane in spirit, easy and confident in performance. This literature circulated as freely at the English court as in France. In time it furnished a large body of new material for English poets and gave them new models and standards for imitation and emulation.

(A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 113.)

1) "The twelfth century is that in which the change from Old to Middle English finally takes place. The continued union of England and Normandy, and - equally important - the later French empire of the Angevin kings, had opened the way for the unrestricted entrance of French literary influence into England." (R.W. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd ed., London, 1951, p. 259.)

The effects of the cultural dominance of France were more profound and far-reaching than Norman military conquest: the variety of French literature, the novelty of its forms and the quality of its achievements carried it where French political authority could not reach and inspired reproduction and imitation all over Europe.

In Italy and Spain the fashions were taken up; in Germany they conquered even more quickly and thoroughly; the Danes and Swedes and Norwegians learned their ballad measures from the French; even the Icelanders, the only Northern nation with a classical literature and with minds of their own, were caught in the same way. Thus French poetry awakened up the sleepy countries, and gave new ideas to the wakeful; it brought the Teutonic and Romance nations to agree, and what was much more important, to produce new works of their own which might be original in all sorts of ways while still keeping within the limits of the French tradition. Compared with this, all later literary revolutions are secondary and partial changes.
(W.P.Ken, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp. 64-5.)

Though the Normans in their military adventures and their pilgrimages were the agents through whom French literary influence reached other countries than England, ⁽¹⁾ their own literature, largely confined to the didactic and the utilitarian, had little of comparable value to contribute ⁽²⁾ Consequently, the chief cultural effect of the Conquest was not the immediate substitution of a superior Norman literature for an inferior English one, but rather the incidental result of the fact that, at a

1) "It seems probable that the Normans had a good deal to do as agents in this revolution. They were in relations with many different people. They had Bretons on their borders in Brittany; they conquered England, and then they touched upon the Welsh; they were fond of pilgrimages; they settled in Apulia and Sicily, where they had dealings with Greeks and Saracens as well as Italians" (W.P.Ken, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p. 65.)

2) See E. Leeson and L. Garsian, A History of English Literature, New York, 1928, pp. 67-73; W.E. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1786, pp. 111-39; H.E. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, pp. 55-85.

time when France was about to become the literary centre of Europe, it introduced a dialect of French as the political, social and cultural language of England. By the end of the Twelfth century French had established itself as an international literary medium comparable only with Latin,⁽¹⁾ and as such its influence would inevitably have penetrated to England as to every other European country, - the social conditions established by the Conquest merely speeded the process and made its effects more profound.

No doubt that influence would have been considerable even in an Anglo-Saxon England, as it was in fact in Thirteenth century Norway, but matters were simplified by the presence of a foreign aristocracy in Church and State.
(H.A. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 289.)

Yet, paradoxically, the unusual degree to which England was exposed to French influence, though it made English readers familiar with the new forms and ideas in the original, inhibited their reflection in the native literature as such.

Indeed it might be said that the Norman Conquest made it less easy for the English than it was for the Germans to employ the French ideas when they were writing books of their own in their own language. The French influence was too strong in England; the native language was discouraged; many Englishmen wrote their books in French, instead of making English adaptations from the French. The Germans, who were independent politically, were not tempted in the same way as the English, and in many respects they were more successful than the English as translators from the French, as adapters of French 'motives' and ideas?
(W.P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp. 16-17.)

Whereas in countries where the cultural influence of France was not associated with political dominance, native authors were free to enrich

1) See E.A. Baker in A History of English Literature, (ed. J. Doohan), London, 1923, p. 612.

the national literature with whatever they found valuable in the French tradition, the Conquest, by introducing a Romanised aristocracy, whose patronage extended only to works in their own language, forced English writers to abandon the native literature and work only within that tradition.

....it is necessary to remember that for the first two centuries after the Conquest England was culturally a province of France. It was in this country as well as in France that French poets found patrons and cultivated the new poetry of courtly love and adventure. Educated readers in England read, not English, but Latin and French.
(A.J.C.Grierson and J.C.Smith, A Critical History of English Poetry, London, 1950, p.10.) (1)

Circumstances in the two centuries following the Conquest, when both French and English authors produced works in French and Anglo-Norman which circulated with equal acceptance in both countries, demonstrate the essential artificiality of the whole issue of literary influences under Medieval social conditions. However unavoidable in literary history, it is nonetheless misleading to speak of French culture as a concrete force operative in English society of the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries, at a time when France was not yet a political unity, nor, conceivably, a cultural one. A common conception of social cohesion reflected in the feudal system⁽²⁾, and a common educational basis rooted in a common faith⁽³⁾, gave to Western Europe a sense of unity which

1) See also J.J.Jusserant, A Literary History of the English People: From the Origins to the Renaissance, London, 1895, pp.213-14.
2) See E.Barker, "Unity in the Middle Ages" in The Unity of Western Civilisation, (ed.F.C.Hervin), London, 1919, pp.91-121.
3) "On this common basis -the Bible, the Church, and the Latin language- was then established the education of Western Europe, and the form it then assumed it retained for over a thousand years, almost without change. By this a common cast was given to the intellect, and the nations were disciplined by common spiritual teaching" (A.J.Carlyle,

surmounted the emergent national divisions.

So far as there is such a thing as nationalism in literature it is wholly modern, while in medieval literature and art there is hardly anything of it. This may seem strange to those who imagine that it is only the railway and the steamship which have brought the world together, but the truth is that the movement of ideas and fashions was probably at least as rapid in the Middle Ages as it is to-day. However this may be, the fact is, I think, clear, that when we come to examine medieval literature we find that it is practically homogeneous, that whether we look at it in England or France, in Germany or in Scandinavia, it has practically the same qualities.

(A.J. Carlyle, "The Common Elements in European Literature and Art" in The Unity of Western Civilization, (ed. F.S. Marvin), London, 1915, p. 138.)

This uniformity of social and cultural backgrounds does much to account for the readiness with which French literature was accepted in other countries and to explain why its influence was not restricted by awareness of its national affiliations.

Medieval French literature is the expression of a feudal and Christian society, and as European society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was based upon the same principles, nations were prepared to welcome French literature as expressing their own social feelings and aspirations.

(H.J. Chaytor, From Serf to Knight: An Introduction to Medieval Literature, Cambridge, 1943, p. 3.)

In an age when the means of communication were severely restricted, the diffusion of intellectual ideas and literary forms was aided by the existence of such international cultural centers as monasteries, courts and universities,⁽¹⁾ and by the relative ease with which linguistic

(Cont.) "The Common Elements in European Literature and Art" in The Unity of Western Civilization, (ed. F.S. Marvin), London, 1915, pp. 132-3.)

- 1) "The court, feudal, episcopal, or royal, is important primarily for the circulation of the courtly type of literature, through the intermediary of jongleurs, trouvères, and Coliardi, those 'jongleurs of the clerical world'. Such composers and colporteurs required patrons, and only the richer courts could offer them permanent support, so that they were perforce migratory, passing from court to court or moving about with a migratory patron, . . . In this way the subject-matter of French poetry spread over Western Europe; original French

(1)
barriers were surmounted. Literary inter-communion was furthered by the international nature of much of the subject-matter and by the absence of the personal and subjective element in medieval writing as a whole.

There was a general harmony of poetic impulse. Men everywhere sang under the same inspiration, and enjoyed one another's song. Their themes being usually such as came from an indistinct past; being in no wise more the possession of one race than another, nation did not rise up against nation to assert exclusive claims. In all lands primitive myth, Aryan folklore, the fables of remote ages, were handled with the freedom of acknowledged right, without a thought of dispute.

Rarely do popular medieval works seem to have been called forth by the inner, the subjective feelings of their authors. They indicate prevailing ideals, tastes, or needs, but seldom the peculiar aspirations of an individual. We scrutinise them not so much to discover the genius of particular men as the development of types; not so much to find out the qualities of him who wrote as those of the society that suggested the writing.

(W.E. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, pp. 5-7.)

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the literary influence of France continued to operate almost unabated in Medieval England, when the linguistic effects of the Conquest had already faded and even the upper classes were once again English-speaking. The nobles, both lay and clerical, and the ~~scholar~~ who entered for their literary interests, continued to feel that their

(Cont.) and Provencal lyrics acquired currency in Italy; and French became the courtly language of a large part of Latin Christendom? (C.H. Johnson, Studies in Medieval Culture, Oxford, 1929, p. 97.)

- 1) "In the Middle Ages, early and late, there was very free communication all over Christendom between people of different languages. Languages seem to have given much less trouble than they do nowadays. The general use of Latin, of course, made things easy for those who could speak it; but without Latin, people of different nations appear to have travelled over the world picking up foreign languages as they went along and showing more interest in the poetry and stories of foreign countries than is generally found among modern tourists." (W.P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p. 60.)

natural cultural affiliations were with France, and that French was the only appropriate medium for sophisticated literature.

In French a large body of poetry was written in England or for English patronage and constituted for over two hundred years the literary entertainment of the English court.

..... For more than half of our period it is possible to distinguish between what was intended for the aristocratic class and what was intended for the people merely by the language in which it is written. Even after English had regained its position at court numerous works avow their author's intention of writing for 'lewd men', that is, the ignorant. Seldom outside of the Middle Ages is literature quite so class conscious.

(A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, pp. 113-14.)

When English again became a literary medium it was chiefly used in popular works intended for the lower classes, while, almost to the end of the period, French remained the language of aristocratic literature, a distinction which is reflected in the number and quality of the surviving manuscripts. (1) With the reappearance of works in the vernacular a triple tradition, in French, Latin and English, was established and continued to the end of the Middle Ages, (2) but inevitably the cultural inferiority of the native language was indicated by the extent to which the literature written in it was subsidiary to and dependent upon that in French and Latin.

The long and difficult struggle of the English language to recapture social and artistic prestige after the Norman Conquest has its parallel in Middle English literature.

1) "The splendidly illuminated manuscripts produced in England during the fourteenth century were in French or Latin and were acquired by wealthy nobles and ecclesiastics; manuscripts in English were, as a rule anything but *éditions de luxe*; they were intended for readers who could afford nothing elaborate" (E. J. Charters, From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Literature, Cambridge, 1945, p. 144.)

2) "Henceforth there were three traditions, three bodies of thought and imagination articulate and inarticulate, each possessing its own appropriate matter, language and technique: the Latin, the French,

In the circumstances it could scarcely have been otherwise. Since the language of the court was basically French until the beginning of the fifteenth century and the language of the Church was Latin throughout the period, and particularly since court and Church were the only important influences bearing upon the literature that has survived from the age, the literature in the vernacular necessarily occupied a secondary position during most of the Middle English period.

....it is no exaggeration to insist that, until the Age of Chaucer, when the Middle English period had clearly passed the halfway mark, there was no important piece of English literature written in the vernacular that was not a shadowing, an imitation, perhaps an outright translation of a French or a Latin original.

(H. Craig, History of English Literature, New York, 1950, p.45.)

Though general opinion upon the period accepts the dependence of English literature upon foreign models, there has been much speculation as to the underlying continuity of native traditions during the post-Conquest centuries and the part which these may have played in giving a certain individuality to the derivative Middle English works. The theory sometimes advanced that the Old English tradition was exhausted and moribund before 1066, is not generally accepted, and, indeed, there is some reason to think that it retained its vitality for a considerable period after the Conquest.

One indication that interest in the older literature did not die with the Conquest is the fact that Old English

(Cont.) and the English (S.L. Kenwick in The Beginnings of English Literature to Skelton, (with H. Orton), 2nd. ed., London, 1952, p.33.)

- 1) "...when all external influences are allowed for, the fact remains that the Anglian tradition was not advancing. It was already a fully-developed tradition when the English brought it to England, and no later poet achieved the stylistic security, any more than the grave dignity of Beowulf, or its clear pictures of sea and shore and moorland? ...also something of the verse and stiffening of the style betray a tradition on the down-grade, and it may be that little of value was being done when the Normans landed? (S.L. Kenwick in The Beginnings of English Literature to Skelton, (with H. Orton) 2nd. ed., London, 1952, p.31.)
- 2) "On the whole, whatever may have been the case politically, there is no reason to suppose that literature was decadent in eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England. The prose was certainly vigorous

manuscripts continued to be copied. Two of the six MSS. of the West Saxon Gospels belong to the twelfth century and we have twelfth-century copies of King Alfred's Boethius, the Distichs of Cato, the Gospel of Nicodemus, numerous homilies of Alfric and others, to mention only a few. Another indication is that the Old English Annals were kept up for nearly a hundred years.

Finally there is a good bit of evidence that ballads and poems on historical and legendary themes were still being sung in the time of William of Malmesbury (c.1125) and Henry of Huntingdon (d.1155).

(A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 117-18.)

There is evidence also which points to imitation of Anglo-Saxon models during the early Middle English period, particularly in the field of religious and homiletic writing. (1) But it is at the sub-literary level, in the oral repetition of folk-tales and popular ballads, that the secular tradition is most likely to have survived until English again became a literary medium.

The early gleemen had been represented, no doubt, by an unbroken line of story-tellers and amusers who were welcome at the firesides of the people, chanted songs of adventure, and miracles of saints by the wayside and at village ales, and whatever there was holiday resort of men. But the literature of the people was, for more than a hundred years after the Conquest, left to perish on their lips. They who were rich enough to pay for written transcripts cared only for works addressed in Latin to the educated world, or to the court in French. Till the end of the twelfth century there was no demand among the rich, in castle or cloister, for written copies of the legends, tales and songs that passed from lip to lip among the people. But when the fusion becomes more complete, when French and Latin literature of the twelfth century has become more and more national, the stream of native literature that had for a time been flowing underground, rises again to the surface and flows on and broadens, and becomes the mainstream into which all others flow.

(E. Morley, English Writers, Vol. III, From the Conquest to Chaucer, 2nd ed., London, 1889, p. 206.)

(Cont.) enough and, though we can speak less confidently of the poetry, the little evidence available suggests that the present lack of texts is due largely to accident! (E. V. Rieu, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd ed., London, 1951, p. 7.)

- 1) "The evidence available seems to indicate that though the Old English homiletic tradition continued to exist in the south-east

The tendency of modern scholarship has been to stress this element of continuity and, consequently, to minimize the disruptive effects of the Conquest.

Old English literature had attained to such a pitch of development that foreign influences, however strong, could only transform and not extinguish many of the characteristic features.

The ultimate effects of the Conquest on English literature, either for the better or the worse, were exceptionally important, but today it is the essential continuity between Old and Middle English literature, rather than any differences, which needs emphasis.

(E.E. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 290.)

But when all allowance has been made for the continuity of the native tradition, received opinion on the period regards Middle English literature as largely dependent upon French for forms, themes and often, indeed, for the detailed treatment of the matter.

A great part of Middle English literature, for whatever class intended, must be recognised as derivative, secondary and imitative. English writers eagerly adopted the themes and fashions of French literature, offering hospitality to the Song of Roland and showing a nice impartiality towards heroes of the French national epic. All through the thirteenth and much of the fourteenth centuries the literature of England was constantly indebted to French originals and followed French example.

(A.C. Benson in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Benson), London, 1950, p. 114.) (1)

(Cont.) more or less vigorously until the beginning of the thirteenth century it was then completely lost and the Old English models replaced by French. In the west, however, the old traditions retain more of their vigour and French influence encounters a stronger resistance. In that district a Middle English homiletic prose is developed, drawing its inspiration and style from the West Saxon models of the late Old English period, but using a western dialect which seems to have behind it a long tradition of literary use? (E.E. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 114.)

- 1) "But what is certain is that in English at this time really original writing - writing 'out of a man's own head' - is so rare as to be, in important instances, almost unknown. When a man did act, as the enormous majority of the romance-writers and not a few others certainly did, merely translate, more or less loosely a single precedent work, he either compiled from several or wrote on subjects which had been so frequently handled, and which had such a large stock of prescribed and expected commonplace and common forms appertaining to

It is now realised, however, that the dependence of English authors upon French models cannot be attributed solely to the conditions of literary subservience established by the Conquest, and that the derivative nature of their work must be interpreted in the light of Medieval conceptions of creative originality and the general practice of their continental contemporaries.

Originality was not a major requirement of medieval authors. Story material in particular was looked upon as common property and the notion that one could claim property rights in ideas is seldom encountered. To have based one's work on an old and therefore authoritative source was a virtue which led Geoffrey of Monmouth and even greater writers to claim such a source where none existed. It is not surprising that such an attitude raised translation to the level of original creation.

(A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 114.)

It is recognised that, despite the rareness of original and creative writing, Medieval literature shows great diversity of development, continual evolution and much inventiveness in matters of detail.

Nothing is more singular, more characteristic, or more puzzling in medieval literature than the immense mass of its additions to the literary stock of the world, not merely in mere bulk of writing, but in new themes, new touches, new handling of all sorts - contrasted with the almost impossibility of attributing any large original increments of the kind to single persons. It is not made, it grows. If writers seldom absolutely created for themselves, they are as a rule careful never to leave any capital that may come into their hands entirely unimproved, if it be only by fresh borrowings and combinations. And it is perhaps not less reasonable and more fair to suspect that their additions were, in many cases at any rate, not borrowings at all, but original gifts - that the creative fancy, too shy to go altogether alone, took its opportunity of exercise under cover and with the assistance of what existed already.

(G. Saintsbury, A Short History of English Literature, 8th. ed., London, 1937, pp. 112-113.)

(Cont.) them, that his work has almost the character of a translation, or at least compilation" (G. Saintsbury, A Short History of English Literature, 8th. ed., London, 1937, p. 112.)

The dependence of so much Middle English literature upon French originals did not, therefore, differentiate it absolutely from other contemporary literatures, and the general practice of the day provided some opportunity at least for the expression of native tastes and interests and the reflection of those elements of the earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition which still persisted.

English poetry had acquired a wealth of materials for fiction. It showed, as yet, few traces of intellectual mastery, or artistic moulding of them. The English taste itself still lacked development in form. Hence its power of assimilation could reveal itself in but a limited degree. It was manifested in the first place in the choice of matter; one theme was preferred, or another set aside, according to the writer's craving for strong and lasting excitement. It was further manifested in the skill with which concrete detail was adjusted to the costume of native conceptions, or in the boldness with which the popular poet drew the substance from the artistic form that enveloped it, and clothed it in new and ruder garb. It was manifested in the humour that now and then broke forth, in the intimate relationship with the life of nature that we have observed, in the moral earnestness pervading the poems of didactic writers and satirists, in a certain melancholy inherited by the Englishman from his fathers; finally in graphic directness and simplicity of expression. All in all, the old Teutonic spirit was still discernible.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, pp. 328-9.)

Viewed in the context of the literary conditions established by the Conquest, the displacement of the Old English epic by the French romance appears inevitable.

It was inevitable that narrative should have been one of the earliest types of literature to feel the effects of the Conquest. The older heroic poetry was essentially aristocratic in tone; it may have appealed also to the common people, but only as aristocratic literature had it any chance of a written existence. This was the class which felt the fullest effects of the Conquest, and which was mainly replaced by Normans with but little interest in the literature of the conquered. We have no reason to suppose that heroic poetry ceased to be composed, but it certainly ceased to be written down, and when narrative poetry was again written in English it had been greatly influenced by contemporary French fashions.

Even when the old subjects were still used they had been completely remodelled and the result was romance and not heroic poetry.

(R.W.Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 196.)

As in most other branches of English literature the immediate effect of the Conquest was a negative one: social changes having removed those who had patronized the Old English epic, the native literature remained devoid of secular narrative verse so long as the Normanized aristocracy was capable of reading the contemporary French counterpart.

The romance in its beginning was an aristocratic type appealing to the tastes of the upper class. As long as French remained the normal language of the English ruling classes the romances that circulated in England were French and those written in England were written in French. This means that romances in English are not to be expected until English begins to displace French as the language of polite society, that is, until the middle of the thirteenth century. (A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 174.) (1)

And, inevitably, even when English again became the medium of aristocratic literature, the interim decay of the native tradition of narrative verse forced English authors to rely almost wholly upon French models.

In England, when, after the Anglo-Norman poetry, it became possible again to use the vernacular, even in poems or prose works meant for cultivated society—that is to say, from the latter half of the twelfth to the end of the fourteenth century, almost all the poems of any length were translations, paraphrases, or adaptations of French romance.....

(E.A. Baker in A History of English Literature (ed. J. Buchan), London, 1923, p. 519.)

Yet, paradoxically, the earliest romances to appear in the English language are concerned, not with the familiar matters of the roman courtois, but with themes drawn from the Germanic and Scandinavian past of the nation and with the deeds of contemporary

1) See also, W.P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp. 102-3.

English heroes,—the so-called Matter of England, with its stories of
 Horn and Havelok, of Beues of Hamtoun and Guy of Warwick.⁽¹⁾ It is true
 that, though we know of the existence of a considerable number of such
 native legends,⁽²⁾ only those which achieved literary form in French or
 Anglo-Norman, were eventually made use of by English redactors.⁽³⁾ The
 introduction of popular folk-lore into the reviving literature of
 England was, apparently, a specifically Norman contribution,⁽⁴⁾ made at a
 time when French romance was still known only in the original and had
 not yet begun to influence the English narrative tradition. And des-
 pite the immediate origin of their matter the extant examples are
 distinctly English and popular in tone, reflecting the tastes of an
 audience lower in the social scale than the courtly circles for which
 the French romances were produced.⁽⁵⁾ Indeed, these relatively brief

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- 1) "....we cannot help noticing that most of the romances, and certainly the most popular, written in English before 1300 were concerned with English subjects and that only after 1300 do we find stories of the Charlemagne and Arthurian cycles or of classical legend being adapted for a public that now preferred its entertainment in English rather than in French" (A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 175.)
 - 2) See R.M. Wilson, The Lost Literature of Middle English, London, 1952, pp. 13-14.
 - 3) "The English writers of romance seem to have been dependent on French originals; only when they came across French versions of the English tales would they write them down, though they might prefer to give the current English version rather than translate the French. This dependence of English romances on French originals may explain why, in the 'Matter of England' only those romances of which earlier French versions are extant have been written down in English" (R.M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 26).
 - 4) "There are those who would still deprive the Normans of much participation in propagating the 'matter of Britain'; but none can deny them the credit of making considerable English tradition accessible to the world: the extant French romances of Horn et Rimenhild, Havelok, Waldef, Guy de Warwick, and Boeve de Hamtoun are the work of Normans in England" (W.H. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, p. 117.)
 - 5) "Though both King Horn and Havelok are based on earlier French

popular tales have so little in common with the sophisticated romans courtois that the conventional classification which, on formal grounds, ranks them together, is misleading and unsatisfactory. The relations of such works to their Anglo-Norman originals, where they can be studied, are, therefore, largely invalid as evidence of the influence of French romance upon English redactors.

Apart from this special category of popular narrative, the Anglo-Norman contribution was as indirect as in other departments of English literature: the Conquest merely reinforced the influence of French romance which would, inevitably, have made itself felt in Medieval England whether or not the Norman settlement had taken place.

No doubt the Conquest facilitated the growth of medieval romance in England. Equally certainly French subjects would have made their way into Middle English literature whether the Conquest had intervened or not. The attraction of French subjects and of French models was all pervading during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and is to be found in most European countries.

(R.M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 20.)

But the Conquest, by displacing English as the language of the upper-classes, ensured that, throughout the period when romance production in France was at its best and most characteristic, the originals could be read in England with equal ease and acceptance. The second half of the Twelfth century with the first half of the Thirteenth is generally regarded as the classic period of the roman courtois, whereas the majority of the English romances were produced in the latter half of

(Cont.) narratives, they seem to reflect the spirit of the English middle class, or to be the work of minstrels little acquainted with the ways of the court. It is among such that we might well look for the authors of romances at a time when the upper class was just beginning to adopt English in numbers? (A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 177.)

(1)

the Fourteenth and in the Fifteenth century. Intercommunication between the two literatures took place at a period when the romance had already become widely diversified in form, in subject-matter and in intonation. Any consideration of the influence of the French romance upon its English counterpart must take account of this diversity.

The inevitable evolution of the roman courtois between its birth in the middle of the Twelfth century and its ultimate emergence in the new narrative literature of the Renaissance makes any precise definition of the form impossible.

Il faut donc admettre une formule aussi large que possible et embrasser sous une même dénomination tous les romans habituellement distincts: ce sont de longs poèmes rimés en vers octosyllabiques, dont l'étendue, rarement inférieure à 8.000 vers, en dépasse parfois 30.000, et consacrés à des aventures de chevalerie et d'amour.

(R. Bousquet, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française), (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I, Paris, 1931, p. 83.)

In the course of its long reign the French romance displays much greater variety, even in external aspects of medium and scope, than such a definition would suggest. The earliest examples of the form, variously dated in the mid-Twelfth century, are not in the familiar octosyllabic couplets but employ short rhymed laissez, reminiscent of the contemporary chanson de geste, whose verses have sometimes eight, sometimes ten, sometimes as many as twelve syllables. So far as can be judged from the extant copies, these poems were comparable in length

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- 1) Wells, Manual (pp. 5-7) provides a useful summary of the approximate dates of extant Middle English romances. Excluding examples of the latter of England, but including the English lais, they number:—composed between 1250 and 1350 (mainly after 1300), 19; between 1350 and 1400, 28; after 1400, 30,—not including such prose recensions as Malory's Lorte Darthure and the early printed editions of Caxton.
 - 2) The Alexandre of Albéric de Besançon (or Briançon), generally recognised as the earliest of the surviving romances, is in octosyllabic lines grouped in monorhymed laissez; its later reworking was carried

with the earlier epic, but within a few decades the form was inflated to number many thousands of lines.⁽¹⁾ At the same time the flexible decasyllabic couplet made its first appearance as a secular narrative medium.⁽²⁾ The facility with which it lent itself to detailed and connected narration and the demonstration of its capabilities by Chrétien de Troyes established the short couplet as the characteristic medium of romance. But the period of its dominance was comparatively brief. Already in the voluminous continuations of Chrétien's Perceval, which extended the whole to some 50,000 lines, the romance had burgeoned into formless excess, unrestrained by the poetic medium. Eventually, the more elastic prose medium was substituted to cope with the demand for more and more copious treatments, making its first appearance in the vast Lancelot or Vulgate cycle of the first quarter of the Thirteenth century.⁽³⁾ But the formal development of the romance was not a simple progression: the development of the prose cycle did not displace the poetic forms and the two continued to flourish side by side throughout the Thirteenth century. With the Fourteenth, however, the prose romance gained the ascendancy and retained it until the early presses fixed the form at the moment when it was about to be merged in the narrative literature of a new age. These later examples, in prose, may be regarded

(Cont.) out in decasyllabic lines similarly grouped; while the Grand Roman d'Alexandre, which grew from these, achieved such success with the dodecasyllabic line, used as the medium of at least one chanson de geste, as to stamp it thereafter as the Alexandrine. See R. Bossuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I) Paris, 1931, pp. 84-5.

1) The Roman de Thèbes, dated c. 1150, numbers over 10,000 lines; the Roman de Troie of c. 1160 not less than 30,000.

2) See G. Paris, Esquisse historique de la littérature française au moyen âge, Paris, 1907, pp. 140-7.

3) See R. Bossuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I), Paris, 1931, pp. 110-11.

as less perfect, less characteristic than the verse romances of the Twelfth century, but they are not less important in their influence upon Middle English narrative literature.

The range of narrative forms employed in the French romances is matched by an equal variety in their subject-matter. The Arthurian legends of the Matter of Britain are commonly thought of as typical romance matter, yet the characteristic features of the roman courtois first appear in treatments of the Matter of Antiquity, in the Twelfth century romances of Alexander and Aeneas, of Troy and Thebes, derived from classical sources.

Ces romans, dont quelques oeuvres antiques avaient fourni la matière, offraient pour la première fois une poésie narrative conforme au goût nouveau; faits pour être lus, et non plus chantés, ils étaient destinés aux classes qui cherchaient à se polir et à se raffiner, particulièrement aux femmes. Ils eurent certainement une influence décisive sur la forme que prirent alors des récits en vers d'une origine différente, notamment les romans bretons et les romans d'aventure, que nous voyons pulluler de toutes parts peu après l'apparition des premiers romans antiques.

(G. Paris, Esquisse historique de la littérature française au moyen âge, Paris, 1907, pp. 109-10.)

The romans bretons of Chrétien and his contemporaries, though they established the primacy of Celtic story-matter, neither displaced the Matter of Antiquity nor excluded material of other origins from treatment by romance authors. Even the Matter of France, whose stories of Charlemagne and other national heroes had furnished the subjects of so many chansons de geste, was eventually drawn into the stream of romance and reinterpreted in terms of the new literature.

Le succès des romans courtois devait suggérer aux trouvères l'idée de remanier sur ce modèle les chansons épiques dont la popularité faiblissait. C'est ainsi que le XIII^e siècle vit fleurir, à côté d'anciennes chansons adaptées au goût du jour, de nouvelles compositions destinées à compléter

les cycles, en racontant les 'enfances' des héros ou les avatars de leurs épigones.

(R. Bessuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Galvat), Paris, 1931, p. 294.)

As the Middle Ages advanced romance writers grew more and more catholic in their choice of subject-matter and even at the beginning of the Thirteenth century the diversity of sources employed was too great to permit any rigid classification. The category of the roman d'aventure is usually reserved for stories derived from the popular literature of the East.

Les histoires de ce genre paraissent être nées dans les imaginations orientales; elles ont passé aux romanciers grecs; mais à côté des formes pédantesques et conventionnelles que ceux-ci leur ont données, elles continuèrent de vivre dans la tradition orale et pénétrèrent ainsi dans le monde gréco-romain, où la mythologie enfantait des fables parfois analogues;.... Il est impossible, dans la plupart des cas, de dire à quelle source précisément ont puisé nos romanciers français du XII^e siècle; nous retrouvons les motifs de leurs fictions un peu partout, principalement dans cet Orient qui reste toujours le grand réservoir enigmatique des fables; souvent nous sommes fondés à supposer un intermédiaire byzantin....

(G. Paris, Esquisse historique de la littérature française au moyen âge, Paris, 1907, pp. 120-21.)

Other romances, similarly classified, are believed to reproduce incidents from contemporary life in fictional form. ⁽¹⁾ Such variety of matter within a single category of romance illustrates the attitude of French authors who were clearly prepared to accept material from any source, provided that it was capable of the interpretation they wished to put upon it.

So far as interpretation is concerned, our general conception of the French romance implies a relatively consistent treatment

1) See P. Zuntz, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1904, p. 294.

of the story-matter, a persistent interest in certain types of incident illustrative of contemporary social codes and reflecting the life of a particular section of society. In fact, however, the characterization of the romance in respect of its presentation and interpretation of narrative material is even more difficult than the definition of its form and subject matter. Glusap, the first essential is to distinguish the roman courtois from the narrative form which had preceded it and continued to compete with it for the attention of the medieval audience. But in terms of content and interpretation no absolute distinction between romance and chanson de geste is possible.

In form both are metrical narratives and in subject-matter fictions dealing with heroic adventure and achievement..... There is, to be sure, a general preference for a martial theme on the part of the epic author and for an amatory or adventurous theme on the part of the author of romance. But since neither the epic author holds exclusively to the one nor the author of romance to the others, the mere choice of theme cannot be employed as an infallible means of distinguishing the two.

(N.E. Griffin, "The Definition of Romance", P.M.L.A., XXXVIII, pp. 50-70, Cambridge, Mass., 1923, pp. 50-52.)

The frequency with which military adventure features in the romance and the presence of romantic elements, -admittedly embryonic-, in the chanson de geste prevents any rigid classification on this basis. Yet it is possible to detect a certain progressive development, whereby French narrative, from having been very largely concerned with military incident and heroic virtues, gradually admits an ever-increasing element of the romantic and sentimental. Both the old forms and the new catered for the tastes and reflected the interests of a society which, in the Twelfth century as in the preceding age, was fundamentally military in organization, in occupation and, therefore, in its codes and ideals. In the course of the century, however, gradual changes in the

life of the feudal aristocracy modified some elements of their military code and introduced others which were foreign to it.

La diminution des guerres laisse quelques loisirs aux barons; la vie intérieure des châteaux se fait plus intime et plus familiale, et pour honorer la mère de Dieu, les rudes guerriers ont appris à honorer leur propre mère et celle de leurs enfants. Sous l'influence des idées chrétiennes, cause essentielle de l'adoucissement des mœurs, le rôle de la femme s'accroît et s'embellit. Mêlée de plus en plus à la vie des hommes, elle impose ses goûts et ses curiosités et c'est souvent à sa demande que le pont-levis s'abaisse pour livrer passage aux jongleurs errants qu'elle se plaît à recevoir.
(R. Bossuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française,
(ed. J. Calvet), Paris, 1931, pp. 61-2.)

The ready response of French poets to the changing interests of their aristocratic patrons is reflected by changes in their selection and interpretation of story-matter, and it is this, rather than any significant alteration in poetic form or narrative sources, which marks the early romances as a new departure in Medieval literature.

It is true that the change in interpretation is associated with the introduction of the Matter of Antiquity, but the new material derived from the classical epic and its fundamental appeal was closely akin to that of the Matter of France. It is not the presence in the original sources of such romantic incidents as those concerning Aeneas, Dido and Lavinia, Jason and Medea, Achilles and Polyxena, Troilus and Briseida, which differentiates the new literature from the old, but the eagerness with which these have been seized upon, exploited and expanded by the French authors. The influence of Ovid, evident in the highly formalised, analytical treatment of love, in the duplication of conventional psychological situations and in the exploitation of emotion for its own sake, did more to create a form expressive of the new interests of French society than the substitution of classical epic

for national epic could have done.⁽¹⁾ The extent to which the classical matter was made the vehicle of contemporary interests is reflected not merely in the emotional content of the romances but in the thoroughness with which a veneer of Medieval life, architecture, dress, manners and social usage has been superimposed it. As a result of this ready response to the tastes of the age, the earliest examples of the roman courtois contain most of the elements which characterise the form throughout its existence.⁽²⁾

Despite the lack of inhibition with which the Matter of Antiquity was romanticised, the fact remains that the fully developed roman courtois only appears with the introduction of the Matter of Britain, whose interpretation was not influenced by earlier literary associations.⁽³⁾ Chrétien and his contemporaries were at liberty to use the Arthurian legends for the exposition of their patrons' way of life in all its aspects, social, moral and physical. The narrative of adventures gave them ample opportunity to demonstrate the code of Chivalry, not only in its active military aspects but in its influence upon the social conduct of the knight as champion of the weak and

1) See, P. Zumthor, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1954, p. 120, and J. Grosland, Medieval French Literature, Oxford, 1955, pp. 68-9.

2) The adaptation of the Roman de Thèbes from the Thebaid of Statius provides a good example of the change of emphasis by which the romance evolved distinctive characteristics differentiating it from the chanson de geste. "...le sujet avait de quoi plaire au moyen âge par les aventures extraordinaires qui en forment le tissu, par l'abondance des récits de batailles et l'histoire du long siège de Thèbes. Notre auteur l'a traité fort librement: il en a beaucoup ajouté, sinon effacé, l'élément mythologique, il y a ajouté à pleines mains les anachronismes, il y a introduit des épisodes de son invention, d'un caractère tout féodal, des descriptions détaillées empruntées à la vie la plus somptueuse de son temps et en déformant même singulièrement la réalité, enfin et surtout il a développé des épisodes d'amour à peine indiqués dans le poème de Stace et a donné aux héros un rôle beaucoup plus saillant. Autant de traits qui se retrouveront chez ses imitateurs et deviendront pour le roman médiéval les lois du genre". G. Paris, Le roman médiéval, Paris, 1907, pp. 107-8.)

3) "...it was only by gradual and imperceptible stages that the epic

defender of his own and his lady's honour. But in their hands the romance courtier was predominantly feminine in interest and in interpretation: Courtly Love received equal attention with Chivalry, exercising its control upon the hero even more rigidly than the heroic code had formerly done and exalting the heroine whom the epic had virtually ignored. To them the narrative interest of their material was not more important than the opportunities which it offered them of examining aspects of these courtly codes in operation and applying to the discussion of social and ethical problems the elaborate system of analysis which they had evolved.

They aimed to show the true nature and the medieval phenomena of fin amor, that irresistible, compelling, ~~innumerable~~ affection of the heart, which enslaves mind and body, subdues the will, refines the manners, inflicts agonies of doubt, fear, and despair, works havoc with physical health, but repairs its ravages with its joys, and rewards devoted loyalty with lasting happiness. For their purpose the trouvères of the twelfth century fashioned the machinery of fine-spun analysis, reflection, complaints, pleas, symptoms, and stereotyped subtleties of thought and imagery, which marks the medieval society romance. (S.F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances, New York, 1924, pp. 8-9.)

Just as this analytical treatment of contemporary codes represents the development of a process initiated in the romances of Antiquity, so the projection of the contemporary setting as a backdrop to the action, introduced there, serves to give reality and immediacy to the vague world of Arthur and his followers. But by the very nature of romance the picture of contemporary society presented by in the romance courtier

(Cont.) suffered romantic transformation. The author was the radical in the process - he it was who felt free to undertake the alteration and the audience the conservative. Only in an occasional cycle - such a cycle as that of Arthur, that dealt with the heroic traditions of an obscure and despised people - was it possible to overcome completely the influence of epic tradition. (H.E. Griffin, "The Definition of Romance", P.E.A.A., LVIII, pp. 50-70, Cambridge, Mass., 1923, p. 52.)

is idealized rather than realistic, representing both its codes and its physical setting not as they were but as men would have liked them to be.

One of their merits in the eyes of those for whom they were written must have been that they provided an escape from the failures or partial successes of life as it was lived by showing them that life idealized. The dresses and armour, the feasts and hunts, were cut to the pattern of things known, but on these patterns the romancer embroidered every splendour his imagination could conjure up. In the romances, everything must be of a gorgeousness to which real life could not attain. Hence the length and monotony of some of the descriptions.

This idealization of ordinary life is found in other than material things. Doubtless, in fact, knights did not always act in accordance with the highest conceptions of chivalric conduct. In the Middle Ages, wife-beating was not unknown, even among the nobler classes of society. But in the romances, the hero is a superman.

(D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p. 8)

The codes celebrated in the courtly romance were essentially amoral and, despite the formal observance of such religious ceremonies as those connected with the making of a knight, the earlier examples, at least, were more secular in their interests than the chansons de geste. With the appearance of the Grail motif in Chrétien's last work, still more with its elaboration in the Perceval Contre le Roi Sion and the prose Lancelot, a fundamental change of emphasis took place. The Christian basis of Chivalry, hitherto ignored or taken for granted, became the dominant concern of many romance authors and to it all other elements were related. Love and adventure in arms remained, but they were incidental to the quest for the Grail and the fulfillment of manifold services in defence of Holy Church, and of the weak and oppressed, which his faith laid upon the knight. New story-matter made its appearance within the traditional framework in tracing the history of the Grail from its rescue after the execution by Joseph of Arimathea

to its 'achievement' by Galahad, Arthurian matter was linked with the transmission of the Christian faith to Britain. As part of this process the springs of action, those mysterious events upon which the Matter of Britain depended for the development of its narrative and which the authors of secular romance had accepted without question as convenient plot-machinery, were interpreted as divine intervention and their significance expounded at length. Events were no longer taken at their face value or enjoyed for their own sake: their allegorical significance must be discovered and their symbolism explained. (1) At their best these moralised romances represent an imaginative extension of the roman courtois, restraining the excesses of Courtly Love and giving wider validity to chivalric ideas, but at their worst they are mechanical and artificial, with a transparent didacticism very foreign to the true atmosphere of romance.

Such works represent a collateral development of the form and the secular romances continued to compete with them, both types showing the ever-increasing complexity and the cyclic evolution characteristic of Thirteenth century narrative. Amongst other divergent forms one at least is sufficiently distinctive to require separate classification as the roman d'aventure.

Les romans compris sous ce nom ont pour objet, comme les romans grecs (qui d'ailleurs ont suggéré quelques-uns des nôtres), d'éveiller la curiosité ou la sensibilité par un tableau des traverses que la fortune apporte dans les vies humaines; ils ressemblent encore aux romans grecs, et en général à tous les romans romanesques jusqu'à nos jours, par certaines conventions: le dénouement y est toujours heureux, et les vicissitudes de l'action naissent des obstacles de tout genre qui retardent l'union de deux amants. Ces conventions venaient de loin, et se sont continuées. (G. Paris, Esquisse historique de la littérature française au moyen âge, Paris, 1907, p. 120.)

1) See R. Bosworth, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française), (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I, Paris, 1931, p. 111.)

Amongst the endless adventures which characterize such romances military and amorous incidents play an important part, but they are included for their intrinsic interest, not merely as a means of demonstrating the codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love. Here story-telling claims pride of place over social or moral exposition and the presentation of contemporary life bears a much closer relation to reality than the idealized conception of the roman courtois, despite the fact that the narrative content is often equally fantastic in nature.

The success of the romance in all its variant forms did not entirely displace the chanson de geste, but its influence brought about a change in the content and treatment of the older narrative form.

Après 1150, le caractère primitif de la chanson de geste s'est beaucoup altéré. La technique devient plus savante, l'art passant sur l'inspiration, une tendance se marque, à adopter les idéaux du roman en formation: aristocratisme, analyse psychologique, merveilleux, utilisation de thèmes amoureux.
(F. Sautter, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1954, p. 190.)

The military adventures and heroic ideals of the older literature had not lost their attraction for the readers of romances, and the cyclic evolution of the epics, extending the originals to include the youth and ancestry of familiar heroes and tracing the careers of their descendants, allowed the introduction, within a traditional context, of those elements which the contemporary reader had come to expect.

Die nationale Ependichtung hat noch vor Ausgang des 13. Jahrhunderts den zyklischen Aufbau ihrer Geste abgeschlossen, in Ausführung und Voraussetzungen konnten die Dichter der jüngeren Heldenlieder kaum mehr Neues bringen. Sie übernahmen daher die in den höfischen Romanen gebräuchlichen Motive, Abenteuerfahrten in ferne, wunderbare Länder, Feen-, Riesen- und Zwergengeschichten, welche die Möglichkeiten zu phantastischen Einzelheiten und seltsamen Vorfällen geben und auf diese Weise die Monotonie der früher so ersten Heldenlieder unterbrechen. Diese Zusätze, welche seit Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts in immer größerem Umfang auftreten, sind die letzten stofflichen Erweiterungen durch das dem Kampfepeos unregelmäßig fremde, romantische Element.
(G. Gröber, Geschichte der Mittelfranzösischen Literatur (rev. ed. S. Hoyer), Vol. I, Berlin, 1933, p. 96.)

Despite these attempts to bring the epic into line with contemporary tastes it was progressively neglected by the sophisticated classes and fell into the hands of an audience which saw in it qualities other than those for which it had originally been valued.

En XIV^e siècle, la clientèle change avec la politique et les rapports sociaux. La bourgeoisie qui s'est guindée jusqu'à la cour, veut prendre part à ses divertissements. Mais pour elle et pour le peuple dont elle n'est que l'avant-garde, il est inutile de se mettre en frais. Avec la tournure d'esprit didactique qu'elle manifeste à tout propos et dans tous les domaines, elle n'est pas éloignée de voir dans la matière épique la forme la plus accessible de l'histoire. Et si, pour comble d'habileté, des poètes.....arrivent à la flatter en célébrant son triomphe avant la lettre, ils n'ont pas à s'en repentir.

Le succès de la bourgeoisie réaliste et positive devait avoir pour corollaire la disparition d'un genre où le merveilleux suppose une crédulité qu'elle n'a plus et les thèmes généraux, le respect d'une aristocratie qu'elle méprise d'autant plus que sa résistance est plus faible et sa conduite plus discutable. Et pourtant cette décadence n'implique pas la disparition totale, mais une transformation à laquelle il faut convenir que les chansons n'ont rien gagné.

(R. Bossuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I, Paris, 1931, pp. 294-5.)

The patronage of the new merchant class brought about many changes in the traditional chanson de geste: increased emphasis was laid upon adventure for its own sake, to the neglect of heroic ideals which could have no meaning for those debarred by their station from practising them, and the necessary variety of incident was achieved by drawing on material quite unconnected with the Charlemagne legends, often involving fantastic elements foreign to the nature of the epic. ⁽¹⁾ Significantly the classic heroes are partly replaced by others who act as they did, who display the same courage and skill in arms, but who, unlike them,

¹⁾ See, D. Kallenbach and E. Roussel, Guide de la littérature française du moyen âge, Leiden, 1957, p. 122.

are the sons of merchants, and win honour in a sphere where, a century earlier, they could have played only a menial role.⁽¹⁾ The appeal of such popular figures for members of their own class is obvious, but the fantastic adventures in which they engage and their failure to adhere to any accepted code of conduct, are as foreign to the original conception of the chanson de geste as the rambling prose cycles in which these bourgeois versions are cast.

The romance proved equally susceptible to the effects of social change and from the latter half of the Fourteenth century experienced a similar decadence. The preoccupation of the military nobility with the bitter realities of the Hundred Years' War constituted an unfavourable climate for the cultivation of romantic idealism. True, the prose romances of the Thirteenth century retained their popularity: the cycles were frequently re-copied and even extended throughout the Fifteenth century.⁽²⁾ But the tradition was no longer living and developing and the new additions were no more than pale imitations of earlier incidents. No longer at liberty to celebrate the social ideas of a dominant class, the romance ceased to be selective, but absorbed material from every available source, yet, despite its heterogeneous nature, grew increasingly artificial and mechanical in composition.

Le cadre général est alors tiré d'un conte populaire, le plus souvent d'origine orientale, et les épisodes, comme les personnages, réunissent tous les genres narratifs: légendes magico-graphiques, chansons de geste, romans bretons et romans d'aventures.

1) For an account of the 'villain' as an epic hero see, J. Grosland, Medieval French Literature, Oxford, 1996, pp. 172-83.

2) See, E. Fournier, Le moyen Age (Histoire de la littérature française), (ed. J. Calvot), Vol. I, Paris, 1931, p. 290.

Si la plupart de ces oeuvres sont plus ou moins habilement coulées dans le moule traditionnel, il leur manque, pour rivaliser avec les chansons de geste, un accord de sincérité. Créations artificielles et purement fantaisistes, elles ne sont pas l'expression d'une émotion collective ni la traduction de souvenirs concrets conservés en quelque lieu par la piété populaire.

(R. Bessuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I), Paris, 1931, pp. 297-8.)

The growing influence of the bourgeois was still more fatal to the romance than to the chansons de geste. Their realistic approach to life was fundamentally antipathetic to the subtle idealism of Chivalry and Courtly Love and in response to their tastes a new literature, essentially different from the old, began to emerge.

Tournant le dos aux ruines des temps révolus, elle s'applique à refléter la réalité présente, l'image de la société que cent ans de guerre ont produite. Et s'il s'y trouve çà et là des survivances du passé, c'est que, précisément, la lutte continuait entre l'idéal chevaleresque et le vent de réalisme que soufflait la bourgeoisie.

(R. Bessuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I), Paris, 1931, p. 301.)

The result, so far as the romance was concerned, were works which continued to exploit the traditional machinery and even to celebrate the traditional ideals,--though with inappropriate didacticism--but introduced a note of cynicism and mockery, a realistic appraisal of courtly convention and a barely-concealed contempt of the decadent nobility.⁽¹⁾ They reflected the spirit of a new age, an age inimical to romance in any of the forms in which it had flourished since the middle of the Twelfth century.

By the end of the Fifteenth century the influence of French

1) The most striking example of such 'anti-romantic' romances is the Petit Jean de Saintré of Antoine de la Sale in which the ideals of Chivalry are expounded and ridiculed in a spirit of earthy realism. See, R. Bessuat, Le moyen âge (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet), Vol. I), Paris, 1931, pp. 302-4.)

literature upon that of other European countries was already in decline. The special circumstances which governed its relations with English literature remained in operation, however, late enough to make it probable that the numerous variations of the romance, in form, subject-matter and interpretation, should be represented there. No obvious reason for discrimination against any particular category of romance suggests itself and it can be assumed that when English versions began to appear towards the close of the Thirteenth century examples of the diversified French production were readily available for translation or imitation, and that subsequent developments would also be represented in English libraries. In effect, it has been generally accepted that, throughout the period, most English romances were directly based upon French versions available within the country.⁽¹⁾ The assumption has been challenged, but, though it represents an imaginative extension of existing evidence, views to the contrary tend to be even more subjective in nature.⁽²⁾ Under these circumstances it is recognised that any attempt to evaluate the work of

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- 1) "By far the greater number of the verse-romances are based upon French originals" (A.H. Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances, (Yale Studies in English, IX), New York, 1901, p.x.)
 "Practically all the extant versions are based on French originals" (Wells, Manual, p.1.) "Although originals of many English romances have not yet been discovered, it is practically certain that nearly all existing romances were based on French versions" (A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p.149.)
 "Most of our English romances belong to the fourteenth century and nearly all of them are translations or adaptations from French originals" (A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p.174.)
 - 2) J. Spiers (Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition, London, 1957, p.105) notes the distinctive character of some English romances, but without producing any evidence as to their sources which would refute the common assumption: "Several of the English romances have been recognised to be renderings from earlier French romances; others have been guessed to be so; and the tendency has been to assume that almost all are. Yet several of the English romances, notably those of the Guinevere cycle, are in some respects very different in character from the French romances"

English romance writers must necessarily involve "the huge task of demonstrating, wherever an individual author is identifiable or 'separable', and the sources of his work are known, whether he has shown himself to be a good or bad artist in relation to those sources?"⁽¹⁾ And, similarly, it is accepted that the distinctive tastes and interests of English readers can best be appreciated by contrasting the romance production of France and England, and, where possible, by comparing individual romances with their French originals.

Such a process reveals no clear-cut contrast so far as the choice of medium is concerned. It is true that in England as in France, -though with a time-lag of over a century and a half-, the verse romance eventually gave place to prose versions, but only the most general classification can be applied to the various poetic forms employed.

The metre of the English romances is commonly the short couplet. Several early romances are in the twelve-line tail-rime stanza, and from about 1350 both the shorter and the longer tail-rime were popular. The pieces of this later period are generally inferior, and, as Chaucer's Sir Thopas indicates were probably realized to be so by the cultivated. From about 1350, too, the alliterative verse, sometimes rimed and commonly bound up into stanzas, was employed. This revival and these modifications of the old measures, were used in some of the best of the English poems. The English prose romances are all after 1400.
(J.E.Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400, New Haven, 1916, pp.2-3.)

The octosyllabic couplet, as the medium of the classic French romance, is generally associated with sophisticated versions, the tail-rhyme stanza with more popular redactions, but they appear, in effect, to have been used indiscriminately and to an equal extent.⁽²⁾ Though it need not

1) G.Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p.11, Note.

2) Of the romances listed by Wells (Manual, Ch.I) 25 employ the short couplet and 26 tail-rhyme stanzas of various length, while a small number of others use decasyllabic couplets and mixed verse forms.

be assumed that couplet versions derive from originals in the same medium, the use of the tail-rhyme stanza, with its native and minstrel associations, does suggest more thorough assimilation of borrowed matter and greater originality of adaptation.

....the native and popular element of the early English romance, as compared with its French model, appears at best advantage in the twelve-lined strophe. Foreign materials do not seem to have been quite naturalised until they had taken this shape. The reason is plain. Deviations of form compel and excite greater freedom of treatment. A strophe structure leads to a fixed manner of presentation which is most acceptable to popular poetry, especially the Germanic.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, pp. 249-50.)

Even if it is accepted that the tail-rhyme romances were intended for a more popular audience than those in other forms, nothing can be assumed as to the success of the redaction or the skill of the English author in handling his chosen medium.

To classify the romances by their prosody is of little advantage in a literary evaluation. The tail rhyme stanza in which many of them were composed seems a measure uniquely unsuited for narrative use; its unrobust and mincing pace constantly breaks the flow of the narrative, and it is quite without dignity or importance. Yet two of the best romances are written in this medium, and some of the others attain a certain degree of excellence despite it. The octosyllabic couplet, probably the measure most suited to the purpose and material of the romances, light and rapid in its motion, with wide ranges of pace and mood, by no means guaranteed success to its users. It could become irritatingly breathless or, conversely, have its back broken by being made to carry heavy or involved ideas. Its very virtue of ease of use sometimes led poets to give it insufficient attention, and in consequence to write loose and slipshod verse.

(G. Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, pp. 8-9.)

Classification of the English romances with regard to their subject-matter is equally impossible and pointless. A general contrast with the French romances is apparent since there has been no conscious discrimination between epic and romantic material, no association of the Matter of France with the distinctive form of the chanson de geste, and no progressive emergence of new types of narrative.

The various 'matters' made their appearance more or less simultaneously and were accepted indiscriminately.

It was as if the full cornucopia of romantic poesy had been shaken out over the English people. As from a cornucopia everything streams in notably disorder, so the English seized at random the rich treasures of French poetry, bringing forth what was valuable or worthless, ancient or modern, popular or courtly, in order to adapt it for the home public. No organic relation between form and matter, such as we find in the French epic, existed in these English imitations. The chanson de geste was not handled differently from the roman d'aventure, nor the romance of Alexander otherwise than the romances of the Arthurian cycle.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, pp. 234-5.)

The extent to which the French romance had already proliferated in form and content before English authors began to draw upon it made this inevitable. As a result, the dating of the Middle English romances does not relate to any general evolution of the form or indicate a progressive maturity of treatment.

Few of the romances can be dated with assurance, and, in addition, the surviving versions are not necessarily the latest or the most authoritative forms of their stories or the best that were current. Even so it is possible to observe that there was no general, steady development of quality in the English romances; that the exceptional romances, for instance those of Chaucer, had little influence on the genre as a whole; and that the date of a romance, if we are able to fix it, need have no relation to its quality.

(G. Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p. 7.)

So far as the surviving versions indicate, there is equally little connection between the dating of the Middle English romances and the subject-matter with which they are concerned. Apart from the significantly early group of popular tales on the Matter of England, none of the major categories of narrative can be associated with any particular period. Nor do the English romances reflect any consistent choice of one category in preference to the others, and the number which cannot be assigned to any of the conventional divisions of romance material

(1)
is considerable.

Generalisations upon the choice of story-matter by Middle English redactors tend to ignore the distinctive nature of each category of material as it originally appeared in French literature.

There is an important distinction between the 'matter of France' and the 'matters' of Britain and Rome; this distinction belongs more properly to the history of French literature, but it ought not to be neglected here.

The poems about Charlemagne and his peers, and others of the same sort, are sometimes called the old French epics; the French name for them is chansons de geste. These epics have not only a different form from the French Arthurian romances and the French Roman de Troie. What is of more importance for English poetry, there is generally a different tone and sentiment. They are older, stronger, more heroic, more like Beowulf or the Maldon poem; the romances of the 'matter of Britain', on the other hand, are the fashionable novels of the twelfth century; their subjects are really taken from contemporary polite society. They are love-stories, and their motive chiefly is to represent the fortunes, and, above all, the sentiments of true lovers. Roughly speaking, the 'matter of France' is action, the 'matter of Britain' is sentiment. The 'matter of Rome' is mixed;.....

(W.P.Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp.68-9.)

In effect, the distinctions between the 'matters' have largely been obscured in Middle English literature by the failure of redactors to recognise them in their selection or treatment of source material.

English romance writers sometimes took French epics for their sources and dealt with them as far as possible as they did with other narrative material. There is never, it is true, the same sophistication as in the Arthurian romances. Descriptions are fewer and shorter and not concerned much with fashionable contemporary life. The stories are mainly about fighting, and ladies and love-making mostly play a small part;....

In these ways the English Charlemagne romances bear the traces of their origin; but apart from these things there is no difference between these romances and others.

(D.Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p.20.)

It would, however, be unwise to suppose that English authors confounded

1) According to Wells' classification (Manual, pp.3-4) the numbers are: Matter of Britain (omitting LaSamon's Brut), 22; Matter of France, 15; Matter of Antiquity, 19; miscellaneous, 29.

distinct forms or deliberately romanticised the French epic since this, in effect, was what took place in the later development of French narrative literature. The relatively late versions current in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries had already undergone a degree of adulteration.

Fashioned by French and Anglo-Norman poets and reciters from material supplied by popular or literary tradition, modified by each successive generation to suit prevailing tastes, these legends reached the English-speaking people of England for the most part in late and elaborately wrought forms. There is no English version of any of the Charlemagne legends that reproduces the grave and unadorned simplicity of the French chansons de geste of the eleventh century.

(W. Raleigh, The English Novel, 2nd. ed., London, 1895, p. 2.)

Some authorities interpret the inclusion of such romanticized epics amongst the English versions as a concession to the tastes of a popular audience,⁽¹⁾ while others attribute it to a fundamental national preference, whose influence they detect in all English romances, both popular and courtly.

....English medieval romancers turned less to pure romance of adventure and more to epic legend. Pure romance had been well developed on English soil, but in the French tongue. When English literature came to its own again it showed a much stronger recollection of old epic traditions than obtained in French literature. Romantic the English literature of the later middle ages is certainly; but as a whole it is less purely romantic; it breaks less with its past.

(C. S. Baldwin, An Introduction to English Medieval Literature, New York, 1914, p. 117.)

Lack of agreement as to whether features which distinguish English from French romance are national or social in origin affects every aspect of this subject. In contrasting French and English audiences,

1) "The English Charlemagne romances, many of which are late, give the impression that they were written for a popular, not a fashionable, audience, or by writers who were driven to this somewhat uncongenial material by the insatiable demand for romances" (D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p. 20, Note 2.)

for example, it seems impossible to decide whether differences of nationality or of social status are of greater significance. It is generally assumed that everything which differentiates the English romances from their French counterparts stems from the fact that the redactions were prepared for readers much lower in the social scale than those for whom the originals were produced.

Throughout this chivalric literature a difference is apparent between the more polished and sophisticated poems meant for refined circles, and the ruder lays on the same subjects seasoned to the taste of the vulgar. With some exceptions the English versions are of this more rustic type.

(S.A. Baker in A History of English Literature (ed. J. Bushan), London, 1923, p. 610.)

Such a generalization might safely be applied to the early Middle English period, during which French was still a living literary language amongst the upper classes.⁽¹⁾ But it is scarcely applicable to the latter part of the age of romance, when, except within the narrow circle of the court, French was no longer acceptable as a literary medium. The assumption that the authors of the Middle English romances were literary hacks of little education or social standing, common minstrels who knew their French originals only at second-hand,⁽²⁾ is an over-simplification of the same type. In so far as it refers to redactors of the earlier

1) In romance, as in other forms of literature, such a contrast is characteristic of this early period. "The two literatures exist side by side and for essentially different classes of readers. This becomes clear when we examine the variations of some of the romances which are to be found in both languages. Those in Anglo-French are obviously written for a higher class than are the English versions of them" (R.M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, London, 2nd. ed. 1951, p. 12.)

2) "...the crudity of most existing versions seems to indicate authors of little culture, though not, of course, uneducated. Some will have been clerks, men of the lower classes educated by ecclesiastics because their intelligence was above the average, and others merely minstrels who made their compositions not from French, but from earlier English versions written sometimes in a different dialect and therefore unintelligible to the audience of another district" (A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p. 150.)

period it is, no doubt, appropriate enough.

For a century and more after Layamon, romance in England fell into the hands of journeymen minstrels, whose work is of small account in comparison with the finished poems and the strange and wonderful prose romances written during this period in France. These minstrels had as little ambition as originality, and were content to paraphrase, in a matter-of-fact way and in the pedestrian ballad style of oral recitation, the less recedite adventures in the French romances, without troubling their heads about shades of sentiment, codes of love ethics, or mystic symbolism. They no doubt worked in fresh material now and then from current folk-tales; the many lays, for instance, in which Gawain is the predominant figure are peculiarly English in manners, temper and scenery. But even the romances that seem most English may possibly have been adapted from French originals now lost; and where the insular derivative can be placed side by side with a Continental story we find ourselves comparing a rustic rhymester with a poet two centuries ahead of him in literary accomplishment.

(E.A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, Vol. I, London, 1924, pp. 171-2.)

But such a characterization, however appropriate to the Thirteenth century, is scarcely applicable to the age of Malory, of Caxton and Lord Berners, nor, indeed, to the age of Chaucer.

Opinions based upon an overall view of the English romances tend to discount the value of generalisations of this kind, finding in them a diversity of subject-matter, a variety of interest, and a range of literary ability as great as that displayed by their French counterparts.

They seem to reflect almost every stage of development and every shade of literary cultivation or crudity discernable in the French originals upon which their authors and adaptors or translators drew. The English borrowings were made over several centuries, after the great models had been created by the French poets, and while the nature of the romances in French was being repeatedly changed.

From this bewildering variety the English romance writers selected and refashioned, or simply translated with no apparent system, as their own inclinations or those of their patrons or public moved them. All kinds of stories, French, Norman-French, native, oriental or classical, were apparently equally acceptable. Combinations of subject, kind of treatment and quality occur in no generally predictable relationship. Extremes of good and bad occur even within the several versions of a single story.

(G. Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1931, pp. 6-7.)

Such restatements of the complexity of the situation are a valuable corrective to generalisations based upon the comparison of certain Middle English romances with the classic French form represented by the works of Chrétien de Troyes. They provide a necessary reminder that, in England as in France, "there was not one literary public then any more than now; the available literature had its long range from tragedy to trash, and the minstrels themselves, who were not merely the singers and actors, but the journalists and gossips of their day, resembled the modern 'professional' in extremes of success and ⁽¹⁾ ~~sedition~~ And in this connection it must also be noted that though the most polished and perfect of the French romances are those originally produced for aristocratic audiences, by comparison with which the bourgeois versions appear crude and debased, no clear-cut distinction can be made upon this basis in the case of the English romances.

The division between popular and courtly romances is of littlevalue as an index of quality. The fault which we would most confidently expect to find in the romances composed for uncultivated audiences, namely the reduction of stories to their simplest elements until they become bare accounts of incidents, occurs also in treatments evidently designed for a courtly public. In absurdities of exaggeration the courtly romances can offend as badly as the popular.

(G.Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p.7.)

Any attempt to attribute the success or failure of English redactions to the influence exerted upon them by a particular social class can only be misleading.

The problem of defining the nature and conduct of the English redactions is further complicated, not only by the difficulty

1) G.Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1941, pp.39-40.

of determining, in many instances, which of several existing French versions most closely represents the source of the English work, but also by the realisation that the extant text of the latter may bear only a remote resemblance to the redaction as it originally appeared. It is necessary to take into account many factors which may have obscured the redactor's original intentions.

Particularly we have to allow for the injury which many of the versions have evidently suffered in oral transmission or at the hands of copyists. We have to remember that such of the English romances as have survived have done so mostly as 'versions' -like the folk-ballads- in varying states of completeness. A number.....have survived in a very broken-down and fragmentary condition. Generally, therefore, we have to think of each romance that has survived rather as a 'version' than as the one and only, the unique original.
(J. Speirs, Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition, London, 1957, p. 100.)

The concern of scholars with textual study has tended to obscure the part played by oral transmission in an age when the private reader was in a tiny minority, and to conceal the extent to which the existing romances are the result of a cumulative process of growth and adaptation.

All over we must think of hearers, not readers; and in poetry, once heard or read, there was no property or copyright, no accepted relation between poet and poem. In a more ambitious work there would be a presentation copy for the patron who commissioned it or whose favour was sought, there may have been others for private friends, but the circulation which mattered was due to surreptitious copies passing from hand to hand. Thus no authentic or standard text could exist. In the result we find incorporation, alteration, variation, extension. This is notorious in the text of romances. Behind may lie not an original but a skeleton more or less articulated. These romances pre-eminently were heard, not read; and the rival minstrel who heard, even if only once, a new story, plot or complication was able to appropriate it to his own use and build out the details at his pleasure.

(R. Girvan, "The Medieval Poet and his Public" in English Studies Today, (ed. C. L. Wrenn and G. Bullough), Oxford, 1951, pp. 89-90.)

So, just as the haphazard selection of English romances which has been preserved to us cannot automatically be accepted as representative of

the total romance production throughout the Middle English period, the redactive process cannot be exemplified by any individual text, even where the textual history has been determined with greater accuracy than is normally possible.

Even allowing, however, for the fact that existing copies are probably at several removes from the original version produced by the English author, they suggest that he regarded his function as that of an adaptor rather than a translator of French material.

The term 'adaptation' expresses much better than translation the actual relation between French and English romances. 'Translation' has a suggestion of Bohn, but the real parallel is the adaption of French plays to the London stage. The adaptor seldom approaches his models with the reverence, the loving and conscientious devotion, of a disciple. He was a man of business anxious to meet the taste of his customers; and, speaking generally, he regarded the whole body of romances as new material to be exploited in any way he deemed proper.

(F.J. Snell, The Fourteenth Century, London, 1899, p. 42.)

Adaptation is, however, a term of wide reference which must cover a variety of operations, including, in the earlier period, a process of redaction which took place at a sub-literary level.

....sagas like those of Charlemagne and the twelve peers were carried, in the first third of the thirteenth century, from the hall of the Norman baron to the servants' rooms, and thence to the neighbouring village; but it is very doubtful whether literature had anything to do with such transference of intellectual possessions. Of pieces sung or recited at that time by English harpers and singers, segers or disours, there remains to us but little; and indeed nothing in the original form. We do not know what their attitude was towards their gentler Norman colleagues. Their service as mediators between two heterogeneous spheres of thought and material is, for that epoch, almost entirely beyond the reach of our judgment. In the field of literature the task of mediation fell, in the first place, to the ecclesiastics; and the literary activity of the clergy, if not its concern, was for a long time confined to theological and didactic subjects.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 193.)

The linguistic circumstances of the period had an important bearing upon the conduct of romance redactions.

The process was, we know, complicated for medieval English poetry by the fact that there was undoubtedly in early medieval England a phase of bilingualism — a phase when many people were both French and English speaking. During this phase, we may guess, the redactions from French into English were made. We have no right to assume, however, that such redactions were necessarily what we think of as translations, involving the intervention of reading and writing. As poems were made and shaped orally by minstrels, the redactions could be (and possibly often were, up to the fourteenth century) made orally.

(J. Speirs, "A Survey of Medieval Verse" in The Age of Chaucer, (ed. B. Ford), London, 1954, p. 40.)

Even in the Fourteenth century, when the increasing confinement of bilingualism to the aristocratic and educated classes implies the existence of a redactor-in-chief working directly from a French text, the process of oral adaptation may well have continued in the mouths of those who made his work available to popular audiences.

The poet did not always recite his own work. Frequently he was a cleric and gave his poem to some segger, who made his fortune from it. With favourite subjects, competition sometimes called forth more than one version. Parts of different renderings were welded together by necessity or accident. The segger himself oftentimes felt the throbbing of a poetic vein, and even when possessing little talent, he understood somewhat the technique of form, and was able, in an emergency, to help himself out with a fixed formula. At all events he knew his public, and had learned by long experience what was pleasing and what was not. Hence he omitted passages involving finer shading of analysis in concession to a coarser taste, and lingered with stronger emphasis on those parts where he was sure of his effect. Mutilations were still more frequently owing to weakness of memory and misconception. In the mouth of the seggers, therefore, the form of these poems diverged ever more from that of the original text.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. E. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 235.)

Under these circumstances, many, if not the greater number, of Middle English romances must be regarded, not simply as copies of French originals, but as products of a complex process in which a

variety of elements, native as well as foreign, have been combined.

Although presumably all English romances were based on French versions, not all existing versions derive directly from the French; some are copies or adaptations of earlier English versions, now lost, and of others the direct original is unknown. Where two or more MSS. of the same romance are still preserved, the variations are often so great that mechanical copying from a written version cannot be assumed. There are at least three possible reasons allowing for almost indefinite variations: (1) deliberate incorporation of new episodes to suit new or local interests; (2) transference from one dialect to another, in which poets would not always trouble to give an exact rendering; (3) the copying of a romance from memory. Not only would an enterprising adapter of a French romance be sometimes inspired to incorporate elements of local interest - local anecdotes and traditions - but later English poets of other districts might similarly alter passages in copying an English version.

(A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, pp. 159-60.) (1)

This type of literary creation in which a work was regarded, not as the product of a single intelligence, inalienable and unalterable, but as a natural growth in whose evolution many minds played a part and in which all men claimed common property, was responsible for the haphazard and unfinished appearance of so much medieval literature in all forms and all languages. (2) But the derivative nature of the Middle English romance and the fact that, in the earlier period at least, it was left to the

1) See also, A.H. Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances, (Yale Studies in English, II), New York, 1901, pp. x-xi.

2) "Why, we ask, this rough incompleteness in poems when cathedrals are so finished and fine? Perhaps the best men did not give themselves up to literature, since there were so many other ways of imaginative achievement. Intellectual giants devoted abundant energy to the construction of systems of theology, carefully reasoned and most subtle, to the successful administration of vast enterprises, to the harmonious control of masses of men. Possibly the external conditions of book-making also worked to the disadvantage of literary art. The slow methods of reproduction, the difficulties of rapid reading, the serial style of rendition, militated against proportion and unity. Scribes, we know, interpolated, combined, transformed at will. Redactors often 'improved' until the original design was obscured. Theirs surely is the discredit of confusing many a clear narrative, of making turbid many a poet's thought. Had we medieval works as they left their writers' hands, had we all they wrote, our estimate of their merit might be quite different" (W.H. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, pp. 22-3.)

care of those whose literary interests were negligible, who cared only for action and incident not for the manner in which they were conveyed, gave full force to its effects. As a result, many of the surviving romances cannot be regarded as definitive texts, representative of the creative skill of an individual author or of the tastes and interests of a particular audience. They represent rather a single stage in a process of evolution, of which, even where we possess several related texts, we can trace only the vaguest outline. In the case of such composite romances, generalizations upon English redactions, the working-methods of English authors and the formative influence of their audience can only be accepted where they are supported by evidence from a variety of sources. And such evidence can indicate only the more obvious and general features of the redactive process, those which were common to the majority of Middle English romance writers, rather than the creative talents of an individual.

There is, however, sufficient evidence to suggest that in almost every instance redaction was a process of omission and abbreviation. Despite considerable disparity of length the English romances are, on the whole, much shorter than the French examples. But the degree of abbreviation must necessarily have differed greatly in individual cases, and, as the success or failure of the redaction often depends upon the skill or clumsiness with which omissions have been made, generalization is particularly inadequate in this connection. Most statements of the kind assume that the process was haphazard in operation and unfortunate in effect.

Since the French originals have usually been adapted by mediocre poets the drastic rehandling which they felt to be necessary often resulted in clumsy and inartistic work.

The main thread of the story is retained, but the imperfect appreciation of artistic detail often leads to the omission of points of vital significance, or of explanations essential to a full understanding of the story.

(R.M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 229.)

Such generalisations suggest that the use of abbreviation was entirely indiscriminate, intended merely to lighten the redactor's task and reduce the original to a bare narrative outline. Individual examples show, however, that though many English authors may simply have failed to appreciate the artistic function of the features they omitted, others had in mind a personal conception of the romance to which much in the original version was superfluous. The Fourteenth century Ivain and Gawain reproduces every incident of Chrétien's Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion, but reduces its 6,800 octosyllabic lines to just over 4,000 of the same length.

What is compressed, modified, or even omitted is the detail. Since Chrétien's detail is not merely added for richness, but spent to bring out setting, character, or mood, a change here is a change in the total effect, a shifting of interests from the persons to the events.

Nor is the omission stupid. The translator threw the emphasis where he felt his own interest, - in the movement of the story. Such touches, few though they are, show that the English translator could not have been insensible to Chrétien's use of detail for the suggestion of character or mood. He translated with unusual intelligence and spirit, not literally, but with substantial accuracy. His omissions must have been deliberate. Nevertheless they help us to see better Chrétien's delicacy of art. Chrétien is superior, not only in verse and style, but in clear fullness of personal detail and in finer touches of characterisation. The translator keeps the whole value of the plan and transitions which hold the tale together; he does not keep the whole value of the situation. His work is like a strong black-and-white copy of a painting.

(C.S. Baldwin, Three Medieval Centuries of Literature in England, Boston, 1932, pp. 86-88.)

In other instances, where no guiding principle is apparent the very nature of the French original, over-loaded and cumbered by extra-narrative detail, means that the balance of profit and loss resulting

from a policy of abbreviation almost inevitably weighs in favour of the English redaction. The Thirteenth century Floris and Blanchefleur provides an example in point.

The French original seems to have been followed fairly closely, though with a constant abridgement which results in a version of only about a third of the length of the original. The descriptive passages, the illustrative scenes and episodes are usually omitted with the result that the English romance often seems disjointed, and the lack of artistic detail occasionally leads to avoidable confusion. For example, the translator tells of the disguise adopted by Floris, but omits the details which show him acting his part, and the whole episode of the discovery of the lovers is spoilt by unimaginative cutting. Occasionally these omissions improve the story, as when the artistic elaboration or philosophical moralization of the French poet are avoided, though one suspects that the improvement is unintentional.

Nevertheless, he succeeds in telling a simple unaffected story and in emphasising the pathos which most medieval authors found so difficult. Most of the critical passages retain their dramatic effect and are skilfully told without any of the frequent moralizing which so often spoils a medieval tale.

(R. M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, pp. 228-9.)

In this case the relation of the English version to its French source is of significant interest.

In France, the original version took two forms - the 'aristocratic version', developed for a select audience, and the 'popular version' composed for the lower orders. The former emphasises the effeminate, the amorous, the sentimental, the decorative; the latter neglects sentiment, cares little for description, and presents Floris as a hero of physical prowess winning his lady by force of arms. The English piece is one of the most charming of the extant English romances. It lacks the characteristics of the 'popular' French version. Close parallels with the texts preserved show that the writer followed very closely, and frequently translated word for word, the main element of some lost French original of the 'aristocratic' type, antecedent to any text now extant. But this poem has probably but two-fifths the length of the French pieces. With English feeling, for an English audience, the author qualified the sentiment of his original; he condensed the descriptive matter.....; and he omitted nonessential decorative pieces.....

(J. E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400, New Haven, 1916, pp. 140-41.)

The circumstances in this instance illustrate the difficulty of defining the redactive process, in general or in a specific example, on the basis of the existing French and English texts. They suggest, also, the inadvisability of equating French romance solely with aristocratic refinement of taste and English romance solely with the crude and simple interests of a popular audience. We are reminded that French authors also catered for a popular audience and produced abbreviated redactions which concentrated upon action to the neglect of evocative description, subtlety of characterisation and refinement of sentiment. Yet an English redactor, faced with the choice between courtly and popular versions of a French work, would not necessarily have considered the latter most in keeping with his own conception of romance. Nor, more significantly, would his own version, though intended for a popular audience, have aimed at the same effects or achieved the same results as a French popularisation. It would be an over-simplification to conceive the relations between English and French romance solely in terms of the contrast between audiences at opposite ends of the social scale. The range and variety of French romance are so great, the time-lag before the appearance of English versions and the total period of romance production so long, and the social context in both countries so diversified as to postulate a process of redaction scarcely less varied and complex in aim and in achievement.

In the light of these considerations one fundamental issue presents itself: to what extent can the English romances, so largely and directly derived from French works, be said to reflect the tastes and interests of native readers.

In spite of its varied and incongruous sources, French romance faithfully reflects French sentiment and ideals because it was based largely on oral legends and written by skilled poets who

were able to adapt those legends to suit French tastes. English romance was written largely by poets with far less skill and adapted from the written versions of Frenchmen; for both reasons, therefore, it could not be easily fashioned to suit English tastes, and so reflects less faithfully English sentiment. French romance was also written for and reflects the ideals of the educated classes, ideals which, except in decadent periods, will reflect the genius and character of the nation more closely than those of the illiterate. The bulk of English romance was an adaptation of literature designed for the higher classes of a foreign race to suit the tastes of the lower classes in England. To reflect accurately the ideals even of his audience the romancer would need more than skill and experience in adapting themes from foreign writers; he would have to select suitable themes. Since English poets were unable or unwilling to compose romance except from a written version, their choice was limited; the result, therefore, was that they reflect English sentiment only very indirectly.

(A.B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p. 148.)

This statement is typical of many on the subject, but as well as adopting an over-simplified view of the social affiliation of the romances, it assumes a dichotomy in the literary tastes of the various classes of society.

One fact, however, deserves emphasis here, namely, that in former times the tastes of the different ranks of society were not so unlike in character as in quality, that the lower classes enjoyed the same sort of literature as the nobility, only in a ruder form.

(W.H. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, p. 8.)

The unified nature of medieval society made it possible for individuals to recognise and accept aspects of the social picture as reflected in contemporary literature, whether or not they formed part of their own way of life. The unity of Western civilization was sufficient to give the social concepts celebrated by the romance equal validity in France and England.

England shared with the rest of Western Europe during the Middle Ages a certain uniformity of development. Historians recognise this. Chivalry, one of the major directing influences of the period, for instance, was an international ideal. Moreover, since the relations of France and England were very

close from the time of the Norman Conquest to the time when the romances were written, it is natural that the two countries should have many developments in common. For the same reason we may expect that some concepts in the English romances will be of the general nature characteristic of an age in a number of ways homogeneous, and that at times they will even express individual French attitudes. But this does not mean that they are completely un-English.

(M.A.Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, London, 1947, pp.1-2.)

There was no reason, therefore, why the material of French romance should have been less acceptable or comprehensible to those for whom the vernacular versions were made than to their compatriots who were able to read the originals. The diversity of French romance was sufficient to cater for a wide variety of interests, and the tastes of English audiences are reflected, to a certain extent, by the selection of source material, and, more fully, by the treatment accorded to it by English redactors.

Since the English romances are not generally slavish translations of their originals, we can hardly doubt that English authors shaped the material of their sources to the expression of their own temperament. The forms which folktales and older legends take in the English romances, and the comparison of the English romances with their French originals demonstrate the freedom with which the English adapted their story matter.

(M.A.Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, London, 1947, p.2.)

In studying the forms taken by the expression of English taste and temperament in the romances it is essential to keep in mind the diversity of the surviving examples.

It is very interesting to see how the English translated and adapted the polite French poems, because the different examples show so many different degrees of ambition and capacity among the native English. In the style of the English romances - of which there are a great many varieties - one may read the history of the people; the romances bring one into relation with different types of mind and different stages of culture.

(W.P.Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p.104.)

The necessity for literary historians to concentrate upon general

characteristics of the form has led to neglect of this diversity; in favour of generalizations based upon features common to most of the romances.

Amongst these the statement frequently recurs that English redactors, in drawing upon French romances for their story-matter, were uninfluenced by the technical and artistic mastery in the treatment of narrative, the analysis of character and sentiment, which constitutes the distinctive achievement of the originals at their best.

It was in the Arthurian cycle, as an ideal representation of high life, that the French court-epic attained its highest technical perfection. In the English imitations this art is, for the most part, ignored; and instead of heightening the courtliness of his version by all the resources he might have learned from Chrestien de Troyes, the adapter makes shift with some long-winded prose romance, and churns it into poetry by the light of nature.

(F.J. Snell, The Fourteenth Century, London, 1899, p. 43.)

The assumption is that such redactors were catering for audiences to whom neither the courtliness nor the artistry of French romance made any appeal. (1) Social circumstances made it impossible for such elements to appear, unadulterated, in English works, at least during the earlier part of the period.

As long as the use of French in every-day life was counted a sign of higher rank and greater refinement, it was impossible for a strictly artistic tendency completely to enter the national poetry. The English chivalric poetry hardly ever appeared in pure court-garb. It was more or less affected by a popular element. We rarely discover that purity and finish of form which is wont to flourish in art schools. Generally, those liberties were taken in which the folk-song delighted. There were contrasts, but they were so variously connected and indistinctly defined that they seemed to blend; as in English society no impassable chasm separates the peer from the commoner, the gentry from the free landowners and citizens.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. H. E. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 249.)

1) It has been suggested that this lack of interest in courtly ideals and literary qualities accounts for the apparent neglect of the most polished and sophisticated of French romances, those of Chrestien, by English redactors. See, A. B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p. 150.

But the great range of literary ability displayed in the French romances, and the existence of 'popular' versions in which the courtly element has been ignored or vulgarised, prevents any clear-cut contrast with the English examples, amongst which some, at least, show a certain refinement of literary taste and awareness of social codes.

It is, however, generally recognised that the English romances as a class contain some persistent features which suggest a contrast in basic tastes and interests. Of these the most fundamental is the selective treatment of French sources, by which narratives of adventure, designed to cater for those interested in action and swift-moving incident, were separated from the description, characterisation, and emotional analysis, which, for the original readers, gave depth and conviction to the stories.

....the successful French novelists of the twelfth century appealed to both tastes, and dealt equally in sensation and sentiment; they did not often limit themselves to what was always their chief interest, the moods of lovers. They worked these into plots of adventure, mystery, fairy magic; the adventures were too good to be lost; so the less refined English readers, who were puzzled or wearied by sentimental conversations, were not able to do without the elegant romances. They read them; and they skipped. The skipping was done for them, generally, when the romances were translated into English; the English versions are shorter than the French in most cases where comparison is possible. As a general rule, the English took the adventurous, sensational part of the French romances, and let the language of the heart alone.

(W.P.Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p.72.) (1)

The degree of selectivity varies greatly from case to case, but in general the Middle English romances are characterised by the tastes of an audience whose interest lay in adventure, in action and in variety of incident.

1) See also, A.B.Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, pp.152-3.

Generally speaking, their taste was easily satisfied. What they wanted was adventure - slaughter of Saracens, fights with dragons and giants, rightful heirs getting their own again, innocent princesses championed against their felon adversaries. Such commodities were purveyed by popular authors, who adapted from the French what suited them and left out what the English liked least (G. Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1941, p. 40.)

And, by contrast, it is the elements most characteristic of the roman courtois, - exposition of the aristocratic codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love, analysis of sentiment and portrayal of character, - which are scamped or ignored by English redactors, in response, it is assumed to the dictates of a popular audience.

Unfortunately, whilst the French romances were written for an aristocratic audience, the English versions seem to have been adapted by ruder poets for a lower class. The result is that the French emphasis on the ideals of chivalry and the conventions of courtly love is entirely absent. The different audience was interested more in adventure and fighting and cared little for the sentimental analysis so dear to the noble patronesses of the French romancers; Lancelot, the typical hero of courtly love, never became popular in England. In the English versions the love interest is almost always quite straightforward and only rarely are the feminine characters of much importance. Whilst the sentiment is omitted or bungled the adventures are reproduced in full, often indeed even duplicated. (R. L. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 229.)

Such conclusions reflect the majority opinion amongst those who have studied the romances, and, no doubt, constitute a valid statement of the general contrast between the French and English versions. But, in this as in other aspects of the subject, there is a risk of oversimplifying the situation. Just as the generalization which equates French romance with a courtly and English romance with a popular audience is manifestly inapplicable in certain cases, so also there are exceptions to the statement that English redactors confined their attention to the narratives of adventure in their French originals, entirely neglecting the emotional elements they contained.

In the first place it is not always true that the French romances are adventurous. Some of them are almost purely love-stories -sentiment from beginning to end. Further, it is proved that one of these, Amadas et Ydoine -a French romance written in England- was much liked in England by many whose proper language was English; there is no English version of it extant, and perhaps there never was one, but it was certainly well known outside the limited refined society for which it was composed. And again there may be found examples where the English adaptor instead of skipping sets himself to wrestle with the original -saying to himself, "I will not be beaten by this culture; I will get to the end of it and lose nothing; it shall be made to go into the English language".

(W.P.Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp.72-3.)

And as well as the redactions which select other elements than that of adventurous incident from their sources, there are some, particularly amongst the prose versions of the later Middle English period, which reproduce the originals closely and in full. As almost literal translations of French works these have usually been discounted as evidence of English tastes and interests. ⁽¹⁾ But they may, with equal justification, be interpreted as reflecting the tastes of an audience to whom all elements in the original were equally attractive, -Englishmen of a type and class which, until that time, had been able to read such romances in the unexpurgated French versions.

Romances which have come to terms with these elements in their sources reflecting the codes of courtly society, are, however, regarded as exceptions to the general rule, represented by selective redactions which confine themselves to the narration of adventures.

1) "Finally, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prose translations of French romances were made, sometimes by scholars like Caxton, sometimes for patrons, and sometimes by noblemen themselves like Lord Berners. This.....group may be ignored here because, being for the most part close translation, it cannot be regarded as English literature reflecting English sentiment" (A.B.Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p.149.)

To the readers of such romances it was the hero of action, physically robust, skilled in sports and arms, who made most appeal, rather than the perfect knight of the roman courtois, polished in manner and subtle in his observance of aristocratic codes.

The audience of French aristocratic romance, composed largely of cultured women who lived in an atmosphere of courtliness and gallantry, were more attracted by courtly heroes than by heroes famed for physical prowess, by knights who made devotion to women their chief duty, not devotion to the service of the State. The audience of early English romance were more attracted by physical activity and feats of strength. Even today the Latin races stress etiquette and chivalrous conduct, where the English race stresses prowess in outdoor sports.
(A.B.Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p. 5.)

Inevitably, English readers were more interested in the hero himself, and in his doings, than in his relation with the heroine, whose person, emotions and influence upon the knight in her service, occupy such a large part of French romance.

The French poet was more often preoccupied with the question of courtly love — fine amour he calls it. His heroes and heroines love according to the formula laid down by the troubadours, and their conduct and characters are moulded by it. There are fewer giants but many more nice points of love casuistry in the French society romances, and the heroine, if never quite as important as the hero, is essential to every stage of plot development. Her character is also more varied in its shading: she is proud, petulant, capricious one moment, yielding and submissive the next, as the well-defined traditions of courtly love decreed. She is thus at the same time more complex and less individual than we find her in the representative romances in English.

(A.E.Harris, "The Heroine of the Middle English Romances", Western Reserve University Bulletin, New Series, LXXI (Western Reserve Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3), Cleveland, Ohio, 1928, p. 6.)

And similarly, though the English redactor may find space in which to describe the physical attributes of his hero, particularly where they are displayed in action, he shows little patience with the elaborate descriptions of the heroine's person and dress, which occupy the skill and attention of French poets at such length.

The English poet of this age is too much interested in the progress of his narrative to pause for long on its ornamentation. He is inclined to dispose of the question of his heroine's beauty in a terse, sometimes prosaic, phrase: "the fayrest wyymon under mone". Frequently he introduces her with the assertion that she is peerless in beauty, and then considers the matter closed.

....for the most part the romancer assumes that his lady is fair and is unwilling to devote to the elaboration of the fact space that might be better spent on the prowess of the hero. Like-wise the description of the lady's costume does not delay the story for long. The general effect is one of richness, gained chiefly through beautiful fabrics and jewels, some of which had been recently introduced from the Orient.

(A.E.Harris, "The Heroine of the Middle English Romances", Western Reserve University Bulletin, New Series, XXXI (Western Reserve Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3), Cleveland, Ohio, 1928, pp. 15-16.)

It should not, however, be forgotten that this type of negative redaction, dependent upon its source for narrative incident, yet rejecting the elements which reflect the ideals of courtly society, as well as passages of description and analysis, is not confined to English literature. The redactor of the prose Bérunus, for example, achieved much the same effect as the authors of many Middle English romances.

He appears to have had in view a public which was not greatly interested in 'la courtoisie' and much that the term implied; an analysis of the nature and effects of love is cut short; detailed descriptions of combats and ceremonies are summarised with the object of maintaining rapidity of action and of suppressing the various devices, the circumlocutions and padding which the jongleur used in the interests of rime. Otherwise, he follows the original pretty closely and does not hesitate to repeat it almost verbatim.

(H.J.Chaytor, From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Literature, Cambridge, 1945, p. 94.)

Though in the hands of English authors the redactive process was largely one of emission and abbreviation, their attitude to the social concepts inherent in the romances is not entirely negative. Their treatment of French originals occasionally suggests not merely failure to appreciate but positive dislike and disapproval of the codes of behaviour illustrated there.

....examples tend to indicate that though the English stories generally reproduce the French, the English point of view is frequently demonstrated in the variations made and in the didactic use to which the incidents are put. Many situations or modes of conduct accepted by the French are either modified as if they were distasteful to the English mind, or are used as the basis of expressions of shame, chagrin or reprimand. (M.A.Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, London, 1947, pp.7-8.)

The omission or modification of much material concerning Courtly Love, in particular the unhealthily introspective passages of emotional analysis and self-questioning, makes the English romances appear less artificial, if psychologically less profound, more natural, if also more naïve, than their French originals. To the modern mind, at least, they seem, by their neglect of esoteric moral situations and emphasis upon rational behaviour, to have greater sincerity and give a more realistic picture of contemporary society.

In spite of all their distortions and exaggerations, the English romances are frequently more direct and sincere than the French, even though less attractive to an educated reader by reason of their crudity. They lack the deep significance of the best French versions, but they also refrain from lingering over the details of love-making and social etiquette. Their constant aim was to record the deeds of a brave man, to relate how he served the State, or won his wife by daring exploits, and in spite of their crude exaggerations and misplaced emphasis, they are almost invariably wholesome. They rarely have as subject any theme which idealised or even countenanced a code of conduct which was opposed to generally recognised moral conventions.

(A.B.Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p.63)

To what extent the English romances reflect the moral view-point of their readers, rather than their lack of familiarity with the ethical system celebrated by the romans courtois, is difficult to determine. Informed opinion suggests that their treatment of French originals expresses an aspect of native tradition which was deeply opposed to much found there.

The study of Kurt Lippmann (Das ritterliche Persönlichkeitideal in der mittellenglischen Literatur des 13 und 14 Jahrhunderts,

66

[Leipzig, 1933] lends further support to the contention that the ethics of the Middle English romances are not French, but English or Anglo-Saxon. Lippmann states that the basic virtues of knights as represented in the English romances—courage, steadfastness, truthfulness, honor, prowess, nobility (edelmut), generosity, and manhood (mensake)—are essentially Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, or Germanic virtues. He asserts that the inherent sobriety of the English mind caused English authors invariably to modify the material of their French sources, to lessen the emphasis on passion in all things—conversation, war, love—and to stress moderation, discretion, self-control, and piety. This emphasis on moderation he traces to three sources: Anglo-Saxon literature, Aristotelian ethics, and patristic and medieval philosophy. Declaring that the English poets, with the exception of Chaucer and Gower, had slight interest in and little understanding of the French concept of courtly love, he maintains that they fitted the concepts of courtly love wherever possible to a marital rather than an extra-marital pattern. Without necessarily accepting in full his explanation of the differences, we may grant the truth of the observations on which they rest.
(M.A. Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, London, 1947, p. 8.)

The acceptance of an ethical code based upon marriage rather than illicit love is most clearly reflected in the behaviour of the heroine.

The morals of the English heroine are essentially sounder. The contrast between French and English literature throughout the history of their development had here its beginning. For the most part the moral issue is disregarded in the French genre, and when it is raised the sophisticated tone and atmosphere preclude its being taken seriously. The heroine's scruples are concerned almost entirely with her reputation. Flamenca, Fenice, and the fair lady of Payel, once assured of secrecy, accepted lovers with little or no hesitation. With them love has nothing to do with marriage. With the English heroine, on the other hand, marriage is always the goal. Evidences of laxity, at least on the part of the lady, are too few to be seriously considered. There is some plain speaking, a few voluptuous scenes, here and there a hint of coarseness; but on the whole the heroine of the English romances is not an unworthy prototype of the heroine of the first English novel—the virtuous Pamela.

(A.E. Harris, "The Heroine of the Middle English Romances", Western Reserve University Bulletin, New Series, XXXI (Western Reserve Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3), Cleveland, Ohio, 1928, pp. 6-7.)

Despite the relatively minor importance of the heroine in the English romances, this difference in the moral basis of her relationship with the hero has affected the tone and atmosphere of the entire narrative

in many instances. The result is something much less complex and sophisticated than French romance, yet at the same time more direct and simple in its appeal, more human and credible in the emotional and ethical plane on which it moves.

These are the qualities which have been regarded as most characteristic of the Middle English romances and as compensating to some extent for the more subtle elements in the French originals which their redactors were unable, or unwilling, to reproduce.

Despite their faults the best of the English romances have the merits of good adventure stories. They are simple and direct with little of the artificial tediousness of description or sentiment which we find in the French. Artistic finish is too often lacking but the story is always there, and not crowded out of the picture by unimportant detail and conventional moralization.

(R.M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 230.)

The French romances are most frequently praised for their fertility of invention, regularity of construction and the controlled organisation of their story-matter, though it is admitted that these qualities are more apparent by comparison with the more haphazard English versions than by any absolute standards. Their superiority in psychological penetration, subtlety of characterisation, vivid evocation of the social context, and general literary polish is unchallenged by the English romances, whose virtues, admittedly, lie elsewhere.

The early English romance did not, as a whole, reach the level of its French model. Not only the honour of invention must be ascribed to the French (invention in composition, not in material), but also that of a more delicate execution and more harmonious presentation. The frequently abridged English versions are, as a rule, poorer, ruder, and of a less complete logical structure; and their excellent qualities, a more popular tone, a more vigorous painting within narrower compass, do not make good these defects. But we are charmed by the joy they manifest in nature, in the green forests, and in hunting, and we contemplate not without satisfaction this rude primeval force that does not

exclude deep feeling, even if it often indulges in coarseness. Thus the English muse, if less delicate and dainty than her French sister, was less artificial; if more passionate was less lascivious; and in her enthusiasm for what is grandly colossal, her joy in the actual, she showed, even when repeating foreign romances, many of the features that were to characterise her in the time of her full splendour.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 253.)

Though it is admitted that a few amongst the later English romances attained a literary standard comparable with the best French examples, such generalisations as this are widely accepted. The virtues on which they comment in the English redactions are largely negative, in particular the neglect of elements in the French originals which, to the modern taste, seem distorted and artificial. For the most part, however, they assume that the French romances represent the form at its most perfect and criticise the redactions for their failure to reproduce them fully and without flaw.

The imperfections of the redactions are attributed partly to the intractability of their source-matter and partly to the ineptitude of their authors.

The French romances usually consisted of a medley of ideas, borrowed from various sources, but welded together harmoniously. Even an accomplished poet would therefore experience great difficulty in making drastic abbreviations and alterations without bungling, unless he recast the whole theme. The average English romancer was not an accomplished poet, rarely attempted any systematic recasting, and so, in attempting to reduce his original to half or less than half-size and eliminate such episodes as would not be attractive, he produced clumsy and inartistic work. Sometimes features of vital significance were omitted, and sometimes explanations essential to the full understanding of the theme or of an individual episode.

(A. B. Taylor, An Introduction to Medieval Romance, London, 1930, p. 253.)

To the influence of a popular audience, unfamiliar with the underlying social concepts of the roman courtois, is attributed the neglect and debasement of the idealistic content which made the best of French romances more than mere narratives of incident and adventure.

In medieval romantic poetry the English verse-romance has always been assigned a humble place. As an expression of the ideals of the feudal society in the days of chivalry, it is inferior to the verse-romance of both France and Germany. Even in its better representatives it has lost something of the chivalric, and has gained a more popular tone, a natural result of its origin among a simpler, ruder, more democratic people than the French, and in a period when the heyday of chivalry was past.

(A.H. Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances, (Yale Studies in English, II), New York, 1901, p. xix.)

The somewhat shop-worn and jaded effect conveyed by many of the redactions, their lack of conviction and spontaneity, is regarded as the inevitable result of a literary inheritance received at second-hand, in an age when the social forces which had originally given it meaning and vitality were no longer in operation.

Arthurian romance enjoyed its great creative period in the latter part of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, particularly in France and Germany. It was the period of Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried von Strassburg, and others only less great. As the thirteenth century wore on, the impulse lost some of its force. The English Arthurian romances follow later, and, since their sources are nearly all French reflect this earlier development. But to read them without knowing their French background is like seeing a play in which we have missed the second act. It might seem reasonable to expect that the English romances, built on so solid a French foundation, would reach an equally high level. Unfortunately, the great days of medieval romance were past, and English poets, with a few notable exceptions, were unable to recapture the spontaneity and fire of their Continental predecessors. (A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England, (ed. A.C. Baugh), London, 1950, p. 189.)

These comments, like so many on the Middle English romances, are concerned to explain the comparative failure of the redactions. They are, perhaps, too often based upon the contrast with Chrétien's works, which are scarcely representative of the French romance in general, too rarely upon the detailed comparison of individual examples with their sources. But even those who can only praise the negative virtues of the English romances, their modification of artificial features in the French

originals or isolation of a simple, straightforward narrative by neglect of its complicated descriptive and analytical context, readily admit that, in most instances, the process of redaction was sufficiently fundamental to make the English author responsible for the selection and control of all major elements and to reflect the tastes and interests of English readers.

In the study of the Middle English romances little distinction has been made between the alliterative and the non-alliterative examples. Yet there is a sufficient body of opinion to suggest that not all the generalisations made about the romances as a whole are applicable to those in alliterative verse. This impression is ultimately based upon an awareness of the native origins of the medium and the continuity of tradition which links it with a period of English literature unaffected by French influence. The history of English verse in the early post-Conquest centuries is obscure but the survival of the alliterative medium is undoubted.

Unrhymed alliterative verse suddenly reappeared in the middle of the fourteenth century as a vehicle for romance. Where the verse came from is not known clearly to anyone. The new alliterative verse was not a battered survival of the old English line, but a regular and clearly understood form. It must have been hidden away somewhere underground - continuing in a purer tradition than happens to have found its way into extant manuscripts - till, at last, there is this striking revival in the reign of Edward III. Plainly more went on in the writing of poetry than we know, or shall know, anything about.

(G. Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1941, p. 42.) (1)

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- 1) "What is the explanation of this revival, and this sudden great vogue of alliterative poetry? It cannot have been a new invention, or a reconstruction; it would not in that case have copied, as it sometimes does, the rhythm of the old English verse in a way which is unlike the ordinary rhythm of the fourteenth century. The only reasonable explanation is that somewhere in England there was a tradition of alliterative verse keeping in the main to the old rules of rhythm as it kept something of the old vocabulary, and escaping the disease which affected the old verse elsewhere!" (W. P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, pp. 59-60.)

The record of alliterative production prior to the Fourteenth century is tenuous but sufficient to suggest the uninterrupted use of the medium. (1) The poets of the alliterative revival inherited not only the basic features of the traditional medium but also something of the native literary spirit originally associated with it, to which their work gave new meaning and impetus.

....on the purely literary side there is no real gap in continuity from Old English times. At least three streams of influence, the heroic, the homiletic and the popular, had never died, but were destined to make their influence felt at the revival. At various points they came into touch with foreign influences, but at heart the works of the Alliterative Revival are traditional.

While there is no break in literary tradition, there is in a real sense a revival, a renewed poetic vitality and inspiration. Doubtless something may have been lost between Laȝamon's Brut and the earliest alliterative poems of the fourteenth century, but there cannot have been anything very extensive. About 1350 there is in the west a new outburst of feeling, a new interest in poetry. Doubtless the inspiration had spread from the south and east.

(J.F. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions, Manchester, 1935, p. 86.)

The date and area of the alliterative revival are related to the slowness with which French influence penetrated to the more remote areas of England and to the particular vigour with which native traditions survived in the West. (2) The vitality of the movement is attributed, in part, to a resurgence of national feeling in reaction against foreign domination in English life and foreign influence in

1) For an account of the critical period in the record of alliterative survival see, J.F. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions, Manchester, 1935, pp. 1-14.

2) "In the West.....the old traditions retain more of their vigour and French influence encounters stronger resistance? (R.E. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 2nd. ed., London, 1951, p. 110.) The strength of native literary traditions in this area is often associated with the revival of the West Saxon dialect as a literary medium upon the decay of West Saxon. "In any case the appearance in post-Conquest times of a literary prose in the West, which must have years of use behind it, seems to demand some such explanation. It is in this dialect that the Old English homiletic prose, as well as the alliterative

English literature.⁽¹⁾ The new poetry therefore emerged from a region which was still in touch with native literary traditions, at a period when English authors had gained sufficient self-confidence to approach foreign material with a degree of independence.

In the works which they produced new and old, native and foreign, traditional and extraneous elements are mingled in a way which seems to many commentators the distinctive characteristic of the alliterative revival.

....the contrast between form and content is still more marked. For the ideal world into which we are transplanted by this noble alliterative poetry is by no means an Old Teutonic or Old English one. Manner and sentiment, costume and mounting, essentially belong to cultivated, medieval society, powerfully influenced by France. The same is true of the subject-matter. It is the atmosphere of the later Middle Ages that we breathe in these romances; many of them are patterned directly from French models.

Verse and diction, however, stamp the imitations with originality. The national vesture of the foreign material does not suggest that the material is borrowed. Even the poet cannot escape the influence of form; the altered style brings with it a new spirit. Something old-fashioned and serious, a touch of austerity or of piety, pervades the poems, and sometimes this tone does not fully accord with the themes adopted. This is not all: the peculiar form of presentation also brings with it a certain independence in the adaptation of the original. It appears mostly in details; but the charm of a poem depends very largely upon details.

(B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, pp. 331-2.)

The distinctive, English character of alliterative poetry is displayed, not by its neglect of current forms and conventions, introduced as a result of French literary influence, but by the characteristic manner

(Cont.) poetry, are carried on, little influenced by the continental models, until they culminate in the prose of the Ancren Riwle and the alliterative revival of the fourteenth century. (IBID., p. III.)

- 1) "The wave of patriotism that swept through England in the early phases of the Hundred Years' War stirred the soul of the nation to the depths, and brought about another revival of the old alliterative poetry." (S. A. Baker, in A History of English Literature (ed. J. Buchan), London, 1923, p. 610.) "It is not strange, then, that a newer, /verse/ form was tried, which, though old, was one whose national character was yet felt. It is no wonder that this attempt was made at a time when the native life, as a whole, was beginning powerfully to react against the foreign." (B. ten Brink, History of English Literature (trans. H. M. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 330.)

in which it finds expression through them.

Fashionable formal devices such as the dream or the debate are employed, and alliterative poets become as addicted as any others to describing spring mornings, hunting scenes, and elaborate feasts. Yet their poetry remains distinctive in manner and feeling, as well as in metre. Some of the most striking differences between Middle English alliterative poetry and poetry written in other metres are in manner, a liking for specific detail resulting in solid, realistic description; in feeling, a seriousness of outlook which gives unusual strength and purpose, at least to the best of the poems.

(D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p. 47.)

Despite the origin and associations of their medium the alliterative poems are in no sense antiquated, nor does their treatment suggest that the Western authors were isolated from the fashionable literary movements of the day or devoid of taste and refinement.

....the odd thing is that some of these poems are not at all what we should expect a provincial poem to be. They have a self-assured air, as if their writers, who were evidently familiar with polite literature, knew what they wanted to achieve and how to set about it. In the no doubt extreme case of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight there is a knowledge of aristocratic society as complete as in Chaucer's poetry. Such a poem must have been written for a cultural society of some kind, and it is possible that some great families of the west who were in opposition to the king—the Mortimers, Bohuns, and Beauchamps, for instance—may deliberately have fostered verse of native origin as a rival to that poetry, more closely dependent on French, which was written for the court by Chaucer and others.

(D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p. 48.)

Informed opinion, therefore, views alliterative poetry as an integral part of Middle English literature, yet possessing certain distinctive characteristics: cast in the common forms of the age, yet original in manner and treatment; using a traditional medium, yet neither imitative nor archaic; native in spirit and idiom without being crude or 'popular'.⁽¹⁾

1) "Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight or the poem of the Morte Arthure are certainly not 'popular' in the sense of 'uneducated' or 'simple' or anything of that kind, and though they are written in the old native verse, they are not intended for the people who had no education and could not speak French" (W. P. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p. 80.)

In so far as any attempt has yet been made to distinguish the alliterative romances from other works in the form, they too appear to display this characteristic combination of familiar and distinctive features. In general form and content they are related to the body of medieval romance and each of the major 'matters' is represented amongst them.⁽¹⁾ But in their choice of subject-matter the alliterative authors appear to have been particularly attracted by episodes in which the pseudo-historical background of romance predominated over purely romantic elements.

The poets seem, in general, to have avoided love-romances and to have preferred historical or pseudo-historical subjects such as the Trojan war, the life of Alexander, the conquests and death of Arthur.

(D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, Oxford, 1955, p. 53.)

Much of this material, whatever its national associations, closely resembles the subject-matter of Old English poetry: it is realistic in conception and epic in spirit. In their treatment of it the alliterative poets have, consciously or unconsciously, introduced into their romances something of the atmosphere of that earlier narrative literature in the traditional native medium.

As a literary phenomenon they represent a highly curious reversion to pre-Conquest methods, with certain modifications consequent upon their date of composition. The old alliterative line, remodelled and less restricted, makes a reappearance, together with much of the old epic phraseology and the old epic humour. The enthusiasm with which battle and sea-passages are handled, links these poems of the Middle English period with their Anglian predecessors, but the culture represented is a product of the new period, a period of amalgamation between Englishman and Norseman and

1) It must be admitted, however, that the sole representative of the Matter of France - Rauf Guiljear - has only a peripheral connection with the legends of Charlemagne. "In general, the French themes made little appeal to their imagination. The Arthurian, the Troy and Alexander subjects offered more scope for the description of battles and encounters, for which these poets had a special aptitude." (J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions, Manchester, 1935, p. 107.)

Frenchmen. Together with the old enthusiasm for nature in her wilder aspects, a delight in hunting and architecture, in decorative material and precious stones, makes itself felt.

(P.G.Thomas, English Literature before Chaucer, London, 1924, p.128.)

This fusion of cultures in the alliterative romances, the interpretation of foreign material in the spirit of the native tradition, typifies that independence and self-confidence which allowed poets of the school to treat borrowed forms and borrowed matter without sacrificing their individuality and creative control to the same degree as other Middle English authors.

In the romance-form the results are on the whole much more successful than the attempts of their southern and eastern predecessors and contemporaries. The treatment is more realistic, and more definitely English. There is no attempt to imitate the peculiarly French features of the romances, such as the elaborate analysis of feeling, the numerous digressions, and the extreme sentimentality. The works are, however, not so popular in tone as many of the non-alliterative romances. At their best they excel in vigour and realistic treatment, though, in common with all romances, they deal with life 'in a heightened degree'. They are not afraid to introduce giants and all the stock-in-trade of the romance, but the final impression is that of a chronicle....

(J.P.Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Tradition, Manchester, 1935, p.106.)

The unusual degree of realism which characterises the alliterative romances is, apparently, typical of the whole approach of alliterative poets to the form. It is reflected in their preference for chronicle-matter and in their detailed narration and use of description to give reality and substance to the more fantastic elements in their stories.

....this approach takes the form of an effect of singular richness that is the product of the application of a deliberate, leisureed, reflective and recapitulative attitude of mind as well as medium to remote and incongruous material. This attitude seems partly to be induced by the prosody, for the Middle English alliterative long line has commonly the effect of bringing the writer's subject close up to his eye for minute examination. His presentation of detail can therefore, if he chooses, be prolonged and intimate, is with difficulty detached and made impartial, and is swift

only when some kind of violence is implicit in the subject.
(G.Fane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p. 57.)

Greater freedom of interpretation, more realistic presentation, some preference for historical themes and the evocation of an epic rather than a romantic spirit: these are the features most frequently mentioned when any attempt is made to distinguish the alliterative examples from other Middle English romances.

One of these characteristics is responsible for some difficulty in classifying the alliterative romances. The attraction which historical or pseudo-historical themes had for alliterative poets has resulted in a number of works which might equally well be classified as romances or as chronicles. Of these Iakamon's Brut, despite the predominance of its Arthurian material and other romantic episodes, is essentially a chronicle in intent and in literary affiliation. Others are so factual and realistic in their narrative content and so close to epic literature in spirit as to suggest a distinct category of 'chronicles in the epic manner'⁽¹⁾. They include the alliterative fragments on the legend of Alexander the Great (Alexander A and B), The Wars of Alexander, the alliterative Morte Arthure and The Destruction of Troy, while The Destruction of Jerusalem has more in common with them than with the conventional romance. Together they form a significant proportion of the total of narrative literature in alliterative verse.

The importance of this distinction between the romance

1) This classification originated with Dr. J. P. Oakden. See his Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions, Manchester, 1935, pp. 24-38.

proper and the chronicle-romance is apparent in connection with the question of sources. Of the Middle English alliterative poems classified as 'chronicles in the epic manner' all, including The Destruction of Jerusalem, are believed to derive from Latin originals, though, in some instances, with the addition of minor features from other sources. Amongst the romances proper two cannot be related to any known literary source, though one, The Asnyrre off Arthure, is, in part, a moral tale of a type commonly associated with Latin literature in the Middle Ages, while the other, Rauf Coillbear, makes use of a traditional legend common to the folklore of many countries. The remainder are either demonstrably of French origin, in the case of William of Palerne, Chevalere Asaigne, Joseph of Aramathie, and Colagus and Gawain, or, in the case of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, there is sufficient probability of a French source to provide a basis for discussion. It is with the alliterative romances of this category that what follows is concerned.

CHAPTER II

WILLIAM OF PALERNE

The romance of William of Palerne is generally regarded as one of the earliest products of the Alliterative Revival: "The date is certainly not much later than 1350"⁽¹⁾ The dialect forms of the unique manuscript, -King's College, Cambridge, 13-, are confusingly mixed, but analysis suggests that the poem is the work of a S.W. Midlands author which has been copied by a N. Midlands scribe.⁽²⁾ There is some internal evidence to support these conclusions as to date and area of composition. At the end of the first of the passus into which the poem is divided the alliterative poet makes the conventional call for a prayer from his audience:-

þus passed is þe first pas of þis pris tale,
 a 3e pat louen & lyken to listen ani more,
 Alle wi3ta on wol hert to þe heil3 king of nouene
 Preleth a pater noster priuely þis time
 For þe hend erl of Herford, Sir Humfray de Bowne,
 þe king Edwardes newe, at Glouster pat ligges.
 For he of Frensche þis fayre tale ferst dede translate,
 In ese of englysch men in Englysch speche: ⁽³⁾
(ll. 161-3.)

1) See Gaskien, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. I, p. 56.

2) Ibid., p. 58.

3) Line references throughout are to the edition by W. W. Skeat, William of Palerne, E. E. T. S., E. S. I, London, 1867.

and again at the end of the poem:-

In þise wise hap William al his werke ended,
As fully as þe Frensche fully wold aske,
& as his witte him wold serue, þough it were febul.

.....
But, faire frendes, for goddes loue, & for þour owne menax,
þe þat liken in loue swiche þinges to here,
Preiþes for þat gode lord þat gart þis do make,
þe nende Eri of Hereford, Hamfray de Boune;-
þe gode king Edwardes douȝter was his dere moder;-
He let make þis mater in þis maner speche,
For hem þat knowe no Frensche, ne neuer vnderston.

(ll. 5521-3 and 5527-33.)

Nothing more is known of the poet William, but Humphrey de Bohun has been identified as the sixth Earl of Hereford, whose mother was Elizabeth Plantagenet, daughter of Edward I. He is known to have served the king in France at various times and to have died in 1361.⁽¹⁾ Since the poet's references make it clear that de Bohun was still alive when the translation was prepared, his death provides a terminum ad quem for the poem.⁽²⁾ And, similarly, the poet's association with the earl may suggest that the dialect in which he wrote was that of Hereford or Gloucester.⁽³⁾

In such a factual context the references to "þe Frensche" can probably be accepted at their face value, though there seems no necessity to suppose, as has been suggested, that the French original was obtained by Humphrey de Bohun on one of his visits to France. In an age when a knowledge of French was still a natural accomplishment amongst the English upper classes it may well have formed part of the earl's library or have circulated amongst a sophisticated audience for many years before the alliterative version was commissioned. And, without

1) See the Introduction to Sir Frederick Madden's edition of the poem, Roxburghe Club, London, 1832, pp. ii-iv.

2) "As Bohun died in 1361, and in 1349 returned from a trip to France, the date of the translation may be fixed at about 1350" (Wells, Manual, p. 19.) See also, Kenwick and Orton, p. 356.

3) See Collier, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. I, p. 56.

doubt, the story of the romance had existed in at least one French version for well over a century before William of Palerne was composed.

The French texts which have survived to the present give the story in two distinct, though similar, forms. Of these very much the older is the romance of Guillaume de Palerne, of 9,663 lines in octosyllabic couplets.⁽¹⁾ The story which it tells is not associated with any of the great romance cycles of the Middle Ages, and, probably on this account, very little scholarly attention has so far been paid to it.⁽²⁾ The author is unknown, but, judging from the dialect of the poem, he seems to have belonged to North-Eastern France.⁽³⁾ The romance has been very variously dated in the second half of the Twelfth century and the early years of the Thirteenth. Linguistic evidence apart, the problem of dating turns largely upon the identification of the patroness for whom the poet worked. At the end of the poem he prays:-

Cil qui tes jors fu et sans fin
 Sera et pardonne briement,
 Il part la contesse Tolent,
 la boine dame, la loial,
 Et il destort son cors de mal.
 Cest livre fist diter et faire
 Et de latin en romans traire. (ll. 9653-9.)

To the modern reader the reference is imprecise and the countess has been identified with various historical figures: by Littré with "Isabelle, comtesse de Navarre, qui épousa, en 1265, Jean Tristan, fils de saint Louis,

1) The unique edition, by H. Michelant (Société des Anciens Textes Français, Paris, 1876, lacks critical apparatus. The linguistic apparatus is partly supplied by A. Kuhn in Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, III, Halle, 1879, pp. 244-56, and by W. S. Delp, Étude sur la langue de 'Guillaume de Palerne', Paris, 1907.

2) For a modern guide to critical work upon the romance see:-
 G. V. Holmes, A Critical Bibliography of French literature: Vol. I, The Medieval Period, Syracuse, N. Y., 1947, pp. 82-3, and R. Besenval, Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge, Melun, 1951, pp. 129-30 and Supplément, Paris, 1955, p. 39.

3) The poem's poet anonymous, peut-être originaire du nord-est (près de la

et, en 1173, Robert de Campierre, comte de Flandre⁽¹⁾; and by Madden with Yoland, eldest daughter of Baldwin IV, Count of Hainault, who about 1178 married as her second husband Hugh Candavene IV, Count of St. Paul.⁽²⁾ Madden's identification has been generally accepted⁽³⁾, but it has proved impossible to date the poem more precisely within the lifetime of the countess Yoland.⁽⁴⁾

This version of Guillaume de Palerne has survived in a single manuscript, -Arsenal 6568-, in which it is preceded by the

(Cont.) frontiers de la Fieordie et de l'Isle de France)...? (H.F. Williams, "Les Versions de Guillaume de Palerne", Rom., LXXIII, Paris, 1952, p. 64.) See also H. Michelant, op.cit., p. xxii.

- 1) E. Littré, "Guillaume de Palerne" in Histoire littéraire de la France, Vol. XXII, Paris, 1895, p. 339.
- 2) Op.cit., pp. viii-ix.
- 3) See G. Paris, La Littérature française au moyen âge, 2nd. ed., Paris, 1890, p. 85 and p. 137; U.T. Holmes, A History of Old French Literature, New York, 1948, p. 150; C.W. Dunn, William of Palerne: History, Legend, and Romance (Harvard Thesis, unpublished) 1947, Ch. II. Madden's conclusion is supported by another detail cited by E. Boehmer, "Abfassungszeit des Guillaume de Palerne", Romanische Studien, III, Strasbourg, 1879, 213. The poet refers (ll. 9355-6) to a "Pape Clemens, uns apostoiles, / Qui fu entre les deus Grigoires", whom Boehmer identifies as Clement II. "Die Begebenheiten der Dichtung werden demnach in die erste Hälfte des elften Jahrhunderts gesetzt? Andererseits hat der Dichter nach Clemens III Regierungsantritt, der im Januar 1188 stattfand, geschrieben, denn er unterscheidet den Clemens seiner Erzählung durch jene relative Zeitbestimmung von mindestens einem gleichnamigen Papst aus der christlichen Kaiserzeit, in der die Geschichte spielt...? Somit ist die Yolant, in deren Auftrag der Dichter schrieb, nicht, was Littré für möglich hielt, die von Nevers, die sich 1265 verheirathete; dagegen stimmt zu meiner chronologischen Deduction die Vermuthung Sir Fr. Madden's, es sei die Tochter Baudouins IV, Grafen von Hainaut?"
- 4) Madden (op.cit., p. ix) suggested a date between 1178 and 1200. "...vers la fin du XII^e siècle ou au commencement du XIII^e" (H. Michelant, op.cit., p. xxii); "...the concluding years of the twelfth century" (T.P. McEneaney, "Guillaume de Palerne: A Medieval 'Best Seller'", P.M.L.A., XLI, 1926, p. 786); "...vers 1205" (P. Zumthor, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles) Paris, 1954, p. 214)

Roman d'Escaffie. There are indications, however, of the existence at one time of other manuscripts containing a poetic text of the romance.⁽¹⁾ If, as there is some reason to think, Guillaume de Palerne underwent the normal process of being recast in prose during the later Middle Ages, the redaction is now unknown.⁽²⁾ Much later, however, about the middle of the Sixteenth century, another French prose version was made, and of this a number of printed copies have survived. And in this instance the redactor is not anonymous: "at the end of the volume is an acrostic of twelve lines, the first letters of which form the name of Pierre Durand, who, no doubt, is the compiler."⁽³⁾ Durand has not been identified with certainty, and his version of the romance cannot be precisely dated.⁽⁴⁾ But it is obvious from his comments on the old-fashioned form and incomprehensible language of the original that his own redaction

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- 1) Madden (op.cit., p.vii) cited three copies in Fifteenth century inventories of the libraries of the Dukes of Burgundy. It is apparently one of those which has survived as Arsenal 5568. The others are described by Michelant (op.cit., pp.xiv-xvi) who concludes "qu'il existait au XV^e siècle deux manuscrits contenant le roman de l'Escaffie et celui de Guillaume de Palerne, complètement identiques entre eux et avec celui de l'Arsenal? V...selon toute probabilité, il en a existé encore deux autres qui ont servi à l'auteur de la traduction anglaise et à celui de la translation en prose".
 - 2) "Paulin prétend avoir trouvé l'histoire dans un manuscrit en prose du XIV^e siècle (Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque, Paris, 1780, Vol.D, pp.119-50) et en donne un résumé. Il signale des vers dissyllabiques cachés dans la prose. Cela fait croire à l'existence, jadis, d'une version française en vers du XIII^e siècle, aussi bien que d'une version en prose du XIV^e siècle, qui sont aujourd'hui perdues" (H.P.Williams, loc.cit., p.69.)
 - 3) Sir F.Madden, op.cit., p.x.
 - 4) "Any further information respecting him I have been unable to obtain, unless he is the same with the Pierre Durand, Bailly of Nogent le Rotrou, en Perche, mentioned by Lacroix du Maine (Bibliothèque Francoise, Paris, 1772, Vol.II, p.272) who adds, that he was an excellent Latin poet, and composed many inedited verses both in Latin and French. No notice is supplied of the period at which he lived" (Ibid., p.x.)

cannot be much earlier in date than the earliest of the editions in which it is preserved.⁽¹⁾

Very little attention has so far been paid to this prose version of Guillaume de Palerne. H.F. Williams, the only scholar who has done any detailed work upon it, lists seven surviving texts which he classifies in four groups:⁽²⁾

I: Two copies printed by Olivier Arnoullet, Lyon, 1552:-

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 4288;
London, British Museum, C 97.b.8.

II: Three copies printed by Nicolas Bonfons, Paris, n.d.⁽³⁾

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce D 232;
Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Library, 27283.28.2;
London, British Museum, C 97.b.5.

1) "Tout ainsi comme la vigne qui nest de toutes facons labourée / facilement est subiecte a raulunises herbes / et si elle nest bien et convenablement taille / le fruit en est moins sauoureux / si la convient amener & ameliorer autrement facilement demourroit en frische. Ainsi est des hystoires antiques et choses dignes de memoire qui sont proffitables et sauoureuses comme le bon vin / et augmentent a ieunes gens le cuer et couraige. Mault valent pour le passe temps des seigneurs dames et damoiselles / en euitant oyneuse racine de tous maux. Et seruent de tresgrande recreation & dolectation aux vieulx & plus anciens / oyans parler des choses antiques qui dignes sont de grande veneration. A ceste occasion par aulcun mien amy / fut a moy humble translantour et traducteur de la presente hystoire presente l'ancien liure / auquel elle estoit contenue quasi comme en frische / engrant danger destre perdue : anichelée : & enroillee doubly. Et ie considerant le langage qui estoit romant antique / rymoie en sorte non intelligible ne lisible a plusieurs fauorisant a leur requeste comme de chose tresconuenable / ay tradiut & transfere le langage de ceste diote hystoire en langage moderne francoys. Pour a chascun qui lire le voudra estre plus intelligible? (Quoted from the extracts printed by H.F. Williams, loc.cit., pp. 72-3.)

2) Loc.cit., pp. 66-8.

3) "Daté 1550 par Harvard, 1560 par le BM., Madden, Skeat, etc., considérant cette édition comme la plus ancienne. Mais Brunet (Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres (11, 1817) estime que l'édition d'Arnoullet, 1552, fut la première. Tout semble en faveur du jugement de Brunet? (Ibid., p. 66, Note 2.)

III: One copy printed by Louys Costé, Rouen, n.d.⁽¹⁾

London, British Museum, 12511.9.26.

IV: One copy printed by the widow of Louys Costé, Rouen, n.d.⁽²⁾

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 42-5.

Having examined the inter-relations of these seven texts Williams concludes:⁽³⁾ "Une comparaison des versions en prose française révèle un grand nombre de différences orthographiques, des changements de syntaxe, des omissions ou insertions de mots, mais rien ne s'oppose à l'hypothèse que tous les exemplaires connus.....dériveraient d'un prototype. Les éditions successives furent probablement copiées sur la première, l'imprimeur modernisant la langue et faisant de petits changements à sa guise."⁽⁴⁾ In effect, therefore, despite the fact that they represent different editions separated by considerable intervals, the existing prose texts give a uniform version of Guillaume de Palerne in its sixteenth century recension.

Having compared this prose version (which he identifies as FP) with the verse text printed by Michelant (identified as V) Williams concludes: "Il semble.....que le traducteur ait pris des libertés avec son modèle, comme presque tous les conteurs du XVI^e et du XVII^e siècle le faisaient avec la vieille littérature, sinon il faudrait

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- 1) "Daté c.1620 par le BM., ce qui doit être plus ou moins exact, car Louis imprime de 1611 à 1633...." (Ibid., p.67, Note 1.)
 - 2) "Daté par Graesse Trésor de livres rares et précieux, VII, p.182/c.1634. En effet, la veuve de L.Costé imprime de 1633 à 1681...." (Ibid. p.67, Note 2)
 - 3) Williams indicates (Ibid., p.67, Note 3) the existence in 1681 of an eighth text, printed by David Forrand at Rouen, n.d., amongst the MSS and rare books collected by A.F.Didot.
 - 4) Ibid., p.72.

supposer que son modèle n'était pas notre version métrique F de Guillaume de Palerne?⁽¹⁾ But so far as the evidence cited by Williams is concerned, the differences between the prose and verse texts seem slight by comparison with the general uniformity of the two versions. In all essentials the story is identical in both, involving the same situations and the same characters. As for the differences: "le traducteur de FP substitua au début de F un prologue, et à la fin de la traduction se trouvent (contrairement à F) un poème de douze vers donnant en acrostiche le nom de Pierre Durand. Dans le prologue, on mentionne Laudonin et sa tante Yolande; c'est à elle que F est dédié, en quelques vers à la fin. A part ces deux différences, FP suit F avec assez peu d'écarts" "Le 'traducteur', dans l'esprit de son temps, insère des propos moralisateurs qu'on ne trouve pas dans F. Il y a moins de dialogue dans FP. Celui-ci ajoute ou néglige de menus détails."⁽²⁾ Apart from the introduction and tailpiece supplied by the prose redactor, his additions to the story proper, seven passages in all, cover less than three pages as printed by Williams.⁽³⁾

So far as the study of William of Palerne is concerned the relations between the French verse and prose texts are of importance not because it can be conclusively shown that the latter was derived from the existing text of the former but because these two versions provide our only guide to the nature of the source on which the English poem was based. Of the two scholars who have examined the relation of the alliterative work to Guillaume de Palerne, Sadler compared it with Durand's prose redaction: "By the assistance of Durand's version we are enabled to judge of the accuracy of the English versifier, since they

1) Ibid., pp. 71-2.

2) Ibid., p. 71.

3) Ibid., pp. 74-7.

both translate from the same text, and it is surprising how closely the latter has adhered to his original⁽¹⁾ Kalusa, on the other hand, accepted the verse text edited by Michelant as the most reliable guide to the nature of the source used by the alliterative redactor, though admitting: "V...es mag wesentlich in detail in B. welcher aus der französischen Vorlage herübergenommen sein, der sich in der uns erhaltenen Redaction von V. nicht findet und den wir daher als original ansehen."⁽²⁾ There is no question here of a conflict of evidence since neither scholar made any comparative analysis of the existing French texts: Madden, writing in 1832, had seen only short extracts from the verse Guillaume, then inedited, while Kalusa, who did not have access to any of the prose copies, made his study of the process of redaction on the basis of Michelant's edition alone. Although, as Kalusa's comments suggest, it cannot be shown that the alliterative poem is derived directly from the verse Guillaume, it seems reasonable to accept this as most nearly reproducing the form of the original on which William of Palerne was based. The French prose version, produced some two centuries later than the English redaction, would only be acceptable as a more reliable guide if it could be shown that, - as Madden suggested⁽³⁾ -, both were based upon a common original. Since that

1) Op.cit., p.xi.

2) K.Kalusa, "Das Mittelenglische Gedicht William of Palerne und seine Französische Quelle", Englische Studien, IV, Heilbronn, 1881, p.272.

3) Madden was naturally impressed by the close similarity of the English poem and the French prose version in general outline. But the general conformity of the two poetic texts is equally impressive, and there are details in which they agree in differing from the prose Guillaume. In both William's nurses are called Gloriande and Acelone, whereas in the prose version they are Gloriande and Meglentine, and neither contains the passage in which the latter tells how Melior in her flight carries off her jewels. See H.F.Williams op.cit., p.71.

the verse Guillaume may reasonably be accepted, not as the immediate source of William of Palerne, but as the only available example of those forms of the original which are likely to have been in circulation when the English redaction was composed in the mid-fourteenth century.

The comments of both Madame and Kalusa would suggest, however, that the general nature of the redaction greatly reduces the importance of this issue: since the alliterative poem has so much in common with both versions of the French the minor distinctions between the prose and verse texts are not likely to throw much light on the process by which the English work was prepared. The narrative common to both the French and the English romance centers round a certain William, son to Subrunus, King of Apulia, and his wife Felice, daughter of the Emperor of Greece.⁽¹⁾ As an infant William was confided to the care of two ladies who were bribed by the king's brother to kill the boy and so assure his own succession. Before they could act, however, the prince was carried off by a wolf, who snatched him up while at play in Palerne, near the straits of Messina with the boy and took him to a wood near Rome. The beast was in reality a werewolf, once Alphonsus, heir to the Spanish throne, whose step-mother, Braunde, had enchanted him so that her own son, Braundin, might succeed in his place. Wishing William no harm he caved for him faithfully until one day, during his absence, a shepherd found the boy in the wood, took him home and adopted him.

Some years later, the Emperor of Rome, having lost his way during a hunt, comes upon William and takes him to be page to his daughter Belier. Feeling herself attracted to her servant Belier catches

1) To avoid confusion I have employed the English character names, in a standardised spelling, in referring to both the French and the English poem.

the advice of her confidante, Alisaundrine, who sounds William's feelings and ultimately brings them together in a secret betrothal. When Rome is threatened by an invasion of the Duke of Saxony the Emperor knights William, who is largely responsible for repulsing the enemy. At this point, when all looks well for the lovers, Melior's hand is demanded by the Emperor of Greece for his son Partonodon, and, with her father's consent, preparations are made for the marriage. In desperation the lovers consult Alisaundrine, who sews them into two white bear skins, and in this disguise they escape from the court and take refuge in a cave. There they are discovered by the werwolf, who feeds them by robbing passersby of their provisions. When, on the wedding-day, the bride is missed, Alisaundrine is questioned and admits that Melior will be found wherever William is. The lovers are pursued and change their disguises, dressing now as hart and hind, and, guided by the werwolf, they cross the straits of Messina to Palermo. King Ekrons is now dead and Queen Felice is besieged in the city by the King of Spain, who seeks to force a marriage between his son, Braundinis, and her daughter, Florence, William's sister. Felice has a dream of deliverance and, seeing the hart and hind in her park, goes out similarly disguised and begs William's assistance against the besiegers. He captures the King of Spain in battle and, as a condition of peace, forces Queen Braundis to disenchant the werwolf. Restored to human form Alphonsus reveals William's parentage and is betrothed to his sister Florence. The Emperor of Rome arrives accompanied by Alisaundrine, who is married to Braundinis in a triple ceremony which sees the union of Alphonsus with Florence, William with Melior. Shortly afterwards the Emperor dies and William is elected to succeed him while Alphonsus follows his father as King of Spain.

Even from this brief synopsis it is evident that Gullame de Palerne is composed of a characteristic mixture of romance elements: the adventures of a 'male Cinderella', a hero whose noble birth is concealed until he has won back his rightful heritage by his personal ability, combined with a story of true love which triumphs over all opposition. Amongst the various sub-types of the Medieval romance it has usually been classified as a roman d'aventures. The term has not been precisely defined and is often used to refer to miscellaneous, non-cyclic romances not associated with any of the major "matieres": "...ceux dont l'action ne se situe ni dans l'antiquité ni en Bretagne, et dont les personnages ne furent repris dans d'autres ouvrages".⁽¹⁾ It has more validity when applied to the characteristic content of the romance, though even in this association its reference is inevitably somewhat imprecise. It has been objected that the title "might better be applied to medieval romance in general, for the knightly heroes always arrive at success by way of hazardous enterprise, whether in the pursuit of glory or of happiness in love."⁽²⁾ But the complexity of the genre invalidates such a use since "in many of the stories adventure itself is of secondary importance, yielding its interest to sentimental psychology and to social refinement and picturesque."⁽²⁾ The two elements of love and adventure are not mutually exclusive, but in most instances one or the other predominates to an extent which identifies it either as a romance of sentiment or a romance of incident. In the typical roman d'aventures love is at best an incidental element in the life of the hero: "If the

1) B.Zunther, op.cit., p.150.

2) S.V.Larrow, The Medieval Society Romances, New York, 1924, p.2.

succor of a beautiful lady in need of a champion wins him her favor, he usually accepts it with chivalrous grace or with human complacency, taking it as an agreeable by-product of knightly merit, not as the goal of his ambition.⁽¹⁾ "In the romances of sentiment, on the other hand, adventure, however abundant and creditable to knighthood, is subordinated to love. The hero may travel extensively and accomplish much, but unchanging devotion to the heroine is responsible for his going, for his return, and for most of what he does along the way. Valor, the call of adventure, the impersonal obligations of chivalry cannot long distract the course of the true lover's duty from his lady. As for her, she holds her place as heroine by right of love alone; she has no other excuse for being. And upon the lovers all things converge."⁽²⁾ On this basis a legitimate distinction can usually be made between the roman d'aventures and the more generally recognised roman courtois.

In Guillaume de Palerne, however, the situation is by no means clear-cut. The key-note of the poem is adventure: repeated flight and pursuit, escapes and hurried journeys, sieges and battles. And it employs the characteristic plot-machinery of the roman d'aventures: mistaken identity, disguises, enchantments and prophetic dreams. Yet, clearly, the essential element is of fundamental importance in the romance: love is the moving force of the plot, the lovers, William and Belior, are at the heart of the action and everything turns upon their feelings for each other. The definition of the roman courtois seems no less appropriate than that of the adventure romance, but it is this problem of classification which underlines the individual character of Guillaume de Palerne.

1) Ibid., p. 1.

2) Ibid., pp. 4-5.

4... nous devons distinguer dans ce roman deux choses: d'une part, l'esprit sentimental qui fait de lui un roman d'amour courtois, de l'autre, l'esprit d'aventure qui traverse en fil rouge tout le récit.⁽¹⁾

In so far as its inclusion amongst the romans d'aventures tends to obscure this characteristic mingling of elements the conventional classification of the French poem is confusing rather than helpful.

More important, perhaps, than achieving an exact definition of the romance is the consideration of what constituted its appeal for the original audience and to what extent its individuality is due to the circumstances under which it was produced. The poet's choice of a story divorced from the familiar cycles of romance, with an unusual geographical and 'historical' background, has been attributed to the influence of his patroness. The countess Yolande of Hainaut's identification was aunt to Baldwin VI, Count of Hainault and Flanders, who in 1204 was elected Emperor of Constantinople. A narrative which introduced the Emperor of Greece and made frequent references to the power and splendour of his realm would have a special appeal for those connected with the reigning house.⁽²⁾ Further, a romance with a Sicilian setting would be of particular interest to the Countess of St. Paul, whose husband is known to have passed the winter of 1190-91 in the island, on his way to the Holy Land. It has even been suggested that there is a parallel between incidents in the story and certain events to which the count could have been a witness during his stay

1) M. Lot-Sorodine, Le Roman idyllique au moyen Age, Paris, 1913, p. 238.

2) For this suggestion see H. Michelant, op. cit., p. xi, and L. A. Hibbard, Medieval Romance in England, New York, 1934, p. 215.

in Sicily.⁽¹⁾ It might be objected that the French poet makes specific reference to a written original which he has translated from Latin at the command of his patronage:⁽²⁾ No such original has been discovered and some scholars dismiss the reference to it as the conventional claim of a romance writer seeking to give an air of authenticity to his fictions.⁽³⁾ But, even if the claim is accepted at its face value, this does not necessarily conflict with the theory that the romance is related to historical fact, since it is not suggested that the author of Guillaume de Palerne wrote a roman à clef upon contemporary events. "He simply chose and retold an old story which would serve to suggest the situation and events uppermost in the minds of his auditors."⁽⁴⁾

In the absence of any identifiable original for the French poem it is impossible to determine the process of redaction by which the author attempted to cater for the special interests of his audience. We cannot tell whether his source supplied him with all the necessary elements, or to what extent he supplemented it from his

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- 1) The correspondance between history and romance are somewhat vague. In 1190 Richard I (under whom the Count of St. Paul is believed to have served in Palestine) landed in Sicily and rescued his sister Joanna, widow of William the Good, King of Sicily, who had been held prisoner at Palermo by Tancred, pretender to the throne. He was later joined there by his mother and his betrothed, Berengaria of Navarre, and, having arranged a marriage between Tancred's daughter and Arthur of Brittany, moved on to Cyprus where his own wedding took place. In Guillaume de Palerne the hero comes to Sicily accompanied by his betrothed, rescues his mother and sister besieged in Palermo by a king, whose defeat leads to a series of dynastic marriages. For details see I. P. McKeehan, "Guillaume de Palerne: A Medieval 'Best Seller'", P.M.A., XLI, Cambridge, Mass., 1926, pp. 803-7.
 - 2) See 11.15-22; 11.9649-52; and, in particular, 11.9653-7.
 - 3) "Puisqu'on n'a pas trouvé cette version latine, il se peut bien qu'elle n'ait jamais existé; l'auteur cherche seulement à donner plus d'autorité à son conte en nous assurant qu'il le trouve chez les anciens" (H. F. Williams, loc. cit., p. 64, Note 2.)
 - 4) I. P. McKeehan, loc. cit., p. 805.

own imagination. It is particularly unfortunate that we cannot know the form or extent of the love element in his original. The love of William and Melior is so thoroughly integrated in the plot that it can scarcely have been an innovation introduced by the French redactor. Yet it is surely not fanciful to see the influence of his patroness in the prominence which has been given to it and the manner in which it has been treated in the romance prepared at her command. "Integrated with the doctrines of liens courtois, it constantly analyses the emotions and emphasizes the agencies of love-sickness and the joys of lovers in one another's company. In style it is somewhat precieuse, verbally prolix, full of formal speeches, of interminable digressions, and marked by occasional allegorical tendencies, especially in the consideration of love. Though all this is incongruous when combined with the rapid action and fabulous incidents of a typical roman d'aventure, the style, no less than the content, was probably designed with special reference to the taste of that 'hoine dame' the Countess Yolande...⁽¹⁾ The special interest given to the story-matter by the countess's associations with Greece and Sicily would not preclude that normal feminine preoccupation with the psychology of love which so strongly influenced the content of the roman courtois, and we may assume between her and the poet something of the relationship between Chrétien and Marie de Champagne. Like Marie she would expect the poems produced for her pleasure to reflect her own aristocratic tastes and interests: '.....selbst von einem feinen, ästhetischen geschmacke und hohem interesse für kunst und wissenschaft und alle fragen der galanterie erfüllt, wegen antheil nahm an der geistigen bewegung jener zeit und dieselbe aufs eifrigste dadurch förderte, dass

1) L.A. Hibbard, op.cit., pp. 214-15.

sie den dichtern ihrer umgebung die stoffe für ihre dichtungen angab, sie zur vertiefung und ausbildung derselben anregte und ihnen in jeder beziehung eine edle beschützlerin war. Es ist daher nicht zu verwundern, wenn das uns vorliegende französische gedicht vortheilhaft absticht von der menge der sonstigen romans d'aventures, und wenn aus demselben alles rohere, nur dem geschmacke des grossen haufens rechnung tragende sorgfältig fern gehalten ist.⁽¹⁾

In this respect, at least, the English redaction may be expected to provide a direct contrast with the original version. The redactor's references to his patron's object in having the translation made:-

He let make his mater in his maner speche,
For hem pat knowe no Frensche, no neuer vnderston.

(11.5532-3.)⁽²⁾

suggest that the Earl of Hereford was not acting in the interests of those who belonged to his own social sphere. There can have been few members of the English aristocracy in the mid-fourteenth century incapable of understanding the French romance in the original version, and the audience of William of Palerne would, most probably, be confined to the non-noble classes. It was an audience for which the incidents of the story could have none of the extra-literary significance which they are said to have held for the countess Yolande and the love element none of the courtly associations common to her world and that of Humphrey de Bohun. In so far as the English redactor was responsive to the tastes and interests of his audience the influence which it exerted upon him would, presumably, have differed considerably from that exercised upon the French author by his noble patroness. And as the contrast between the French and English audiences is so clear-cut we might reasonably

1) L. Ksluza, loc. cit., p. 209.

2) See also 11.167-8.

anticipate fundamental differences between the alliterative work and its French prototype in scale, in content, and in interpretation.

It is immediately apparent, however, that the radical abbreviation which we have learnt to associate with Middle English redactions of French romance has not taken place in this instance. Guillaume de Palerne is complete in 966 octosyllabic lines rhyming in couplets, each couplet being roughly equivalent to one of the long, unrhymed, alliterative lines, which vary in content from eleven to thirteen syllables. The English poem, as it has survived, contains 5540 verses, but the unique manuscript lacks four leaves⁽¹⁾, corresponding in content to some 330 lines of the French text, and the complete work must originally have numbered about 5900 lines in all, suggesting a version of somewhat greater bulk than its French counterpart. This is unusual, but need not in itself preclude a process of redaction in which the whole balance of elements has been significantly altered and the character of the romance completely changed.

The example of other Middle English romances translated from the French suggests that the element likely to be most profoundly affected by such a redactive process is the element of love. In Guillaume de Palerne the love-scenes form a long, integrated sequence early in the romance. At the point where they begin, with a passage in which the Emperor of Rome, when presenting William to his daughter Belior as her page, suggests that the boy may be of gentle birth, the English version is closely in touch with the French:-

"Je suit par le heron saint Jere "Apar-fere, my lare lordere, pampereour geide,
 Qu'il est de mistres hantes gees "For mi lof lare lordere, for his me pikes,
 De cora, de vis et de faiture; Bi his meuskful maneres & his meuk-kede,

1) The missing leaves are the first three and the tenth. See H. V. Street, op. cit., p. vi.

Encore errons par aventure pat he is home of god kin, to Cristy hope
 De quex gens est astraits et mis. (11.429-32.)
 Ma douce fille, or retenés
 L'enfant que je vos amain ai.
 (11.692-99.)

Here, unfortunately, the alliterative text is broken by the loss of a single leaf, corresponding to some 140 lines of the French.¹⁾ They encompass a transitional passage in which William grows from a boy to a handsome youth, frank and courteous, equally skilled in chess, in hawking and in hunting, noble in bearing, bold in arms, loved and honoured by all:-

N'en toute la terre de Rome
 N'i a vallés, fil a haut home
 N'a riche prince naturel,
 Quant Guillaumes siet a cheval,
 L'escon au col, el poing la lance,
 Tant par soit de fiere samblance,
 Si gens ne si amanevis.
 Ne sai que plus vos en devie,
 Que tuit semblent a lui vilain
 Et li Lombart et li Romain;
 Bien samble a tos estre lor sire.
 En tot le regne n'en l'empire
 N'i a un seul, ne bas ne haut....
 A cui il soit, de ce ne vaut,
 Des biens de lui que la gens conte;
 Chascuns en fabloie et raconte
 Tous li peuples communement;
 Et l'empereur ensement
 Li porte honor, aime et tenc chier,
 Comme le fil de sa moillier. (11.755-84.)

Hearing the ladies of the court praise him, Helier feels her heart drawn to William:-

Or est si très pensive et borne
 Qu'ele n'entent a autre chose.
 Son cuer reprent et blasme et chosse
 Et dist souvent: "Cuer, que as tu?
 Qu'as tu esgardé ne veu?
 Que t'ont ni cel monstres ne fait,
 Qui m'as embatus en cest plait,
 Que je ne sai que puïsser avoir
 Ne quel error me fait deloier
 Ne plaindre plus que je ne suel?
 Dix! quex muns est dont tant me duel,
 Qui si me fait entendillier (11.826-37.)

1) Fr 700 - 337.

And here, in the middle of Melior's soliloquy, the English text resumes:-

"A seppe aike I a sing, samen to-gedere,
 & melt hely for mournyng & moche Eolie make.
 Min hert hol I haue now for al pat hard y fele,
 Saue a fers feintise folwes me oft,
 & takes me so tenefully, to talk al pe sope,
 pat I wase al marred for mournyng nelgh bondes,
 But redeliche in pat res pe recuerere pat me folles,
 As whan I haue ani hap to here of pat barne,
 For whan myn hert is so hampered & aldes so nobul,
 pat flour is of alle frekes of fairnes and milt.
 Prince is non his pere, ne in paradys non aungel,
 As he semes in mi sight, so faire is pat burne."

(ll. 433-44.)

According to the folio numbering reproduced in Skelton's edition each leaf of the English manuscript contains some 70 lines or verso and verso together. The equivalence between the alliterative long line and the octosyllabic couplet suggests that the missing page gave a full account of the corresponding 140 French verses. The redactor may, of course, have substituted matter of his own invention, but his general treatment of the remainder of the episode makes it unlikely.

At the point where the English text resumes, the love interest is already well established and developing upon conventional lines. The heroine's love having been awakened by hearing others praise the hero's qualities (F: 751-827), the French author has followed the well-established methods of the romans courtois by giving Melior a lengthy monologue in which she examines the state of her feelings (F: 828-940), and by commenting upon the torments of love which she endures (F: 950-70). To develop the situation a new character is now introduced, - Alixandrine, Melior's cousin and confidante, who persuades her to reveal the cause of her distress (F: 971-1076). She tells her of a herb which brings relief in such cases, while at the same time considering how best to inform William of the love which his mistress feels for him (F: 1077-1117). One night the unsuspecting William has a dream

in which Melior appears and offers herself to him (F: 1113-1144); he takes her in his arms, but, on waking, is disappointed to find that it is only a pillow he holds (F: 1145-83). It is now William's turn to ponder on the love with which his dream has inspired him, but of which he feels himself unworthy (F: 1184-1270). His longing drives him to haunt the garden under Melior's window (F: 1271-1336), where, one day, she and her cousin come upon him (F: 1337-1436). Questioned by Alixandrine, he describes his sufferings (F: 1437-1562), and Melior, recognising her own symptoms, reflects again upon the nature of her feelings towards him (F: 1563-1626). Ultimately Alixandrine brings the lovers together in mutual confession of their love (F: 1627-1782).

The episode as a whole is based upon a classic pattern which the English redactor has done nothing to alter. But there are some relatively minor differences between the two versions which suggest a certain independence of approach on his part. Of these the most significant is the combination of Melior's two soliloquies into one extended monologue. Though, in the original, both are concerned with her feelings for William, the first deals primarily with the cause of her awakened emotion, the second with the propriety of bestowing her love on one so much her inferior. At the point where the mutilated English text resumes it is engaged on a faithful account of the former. Melior reproaches her heart for betraying her into the painful situation in which she finds herself, tortured by love, unable to rid herself of the image imprinted on it. Yet, since she would not even if she could, her heart is not to blame, but rather her eyes. And yet her eyes are no more than messengers to the heart. Is she, then, no longer mistress of her own feelings? No, she is not responsible for her behaviour, though

she knows that people will blame her for it. At this point (F 907 / B: 475) the alliterative poet, prompted, perhaps, by the suggestion in the French of objections to her love for William, gives Melior's own judgement of the impropriety into which her heart has betrayed her:-

pan has my hasty hert nolly be wrong,
 Him wol I blame & banne, but ne my bules amende,
 pat nap him so strangely set in swiche strange bume,
 pat wot neuer in pis world whannes pat he come,
 But as mi fader him fond in þe forest an herde,
 Keping mennis kin of þe kintre a-boute.
 What? fy! schold I a fundeling for his fairenesse tax?
 Nay, my wille wol nouȝt a-sent to my wicked hert.
 Wel kud kinges & kayssers krauen me i-now,
 I nel lele mi loue so low, now at pis time;

(ll. 475-84.)

There is nothing to correspond to this in the first French monologue and it has clearly been paraphrased from some lines in the heroine's later passage of reflection:-

"Ains mais pueble de son lin,
 De son valoir ne de son fuer
 Ne mist en si fait lieu son cuer
 Comme j'ai fait, bien le puis dire
 Bien ne devoit li mons despire,
 Quant j'ai laissie dux et centars
 Et rois et fir d'emperours
 Et ceus dont je fuisse honores
 Por un vallet d'autre contres,
 Que uns ne set, n'il ousement,
 De quel terre ont ne de quel gent;
 Ains ne ceunt qui le porta,
 N'onques ne vit qui l'engendra" (ll. 1574-84.)

At this point in the original Love speaks in Melior's heart, warning her that he pays no regard to nobility of birth, preferring nobility of nature, beauty, intelligence and courage. Has not William all these qualities? If one found a golden coin would one value it less because one did not know where it came from or to whom it belonged? These arguments find their place in the English poem within a few lines of the doubts which they are intended to dispel (B: 480-520), but in a version so loosely paraphrased as to bear no more than a general

resemblance to the French. There is no intervention of the interior voice to state the logic of the heart or point out William's virtues, and the telling image of the golden coin has disappeared. Instead, Melior's doubts are resolved by what she herself has heard and observed: by the recollection of her father's description of the rich clothes in which the infant William was found (P: 672-73 / B: 421-23)-

"& pou3h he as fundeling, where founde in þe forest wilde,
 & kept wip þe kownerde kin, to karp þe soþe,
 Ene creature may know he was kome of gode.
 For first when þe fre was in þe forest founde in his denne,
 In comely cloþes was he clad for any kinges sone!"

(11.502-5.1)

and by her own knowledge of his behaviour and the regard in which others hold him:-

"When he kom first to þis kourt, bi kynde þan he schewde,
 His maners were so menakful, & gende was miȝt none.
 & seþþe forsoþe til þis time non vr-tetche he ne wrouȝt,
 But nap him bore so buxumly þat ich burn him preyseþ,
 & van a burn of þis world worchipeþ him one,
 Kinges & kud dukes, kene kniȝtes and other,
 Pouȝh he were kome of no ken but of kende cherls,
 As I wot witterly so was he neuere!
 ȝut wip worchepe I wene I miȝt him wel loue!"

(11.507-15.)

The whole effect of the Middle English version is forthright and explicit where the French is allusive and general, and where the original author allowed the decision to which Melior is brought to be implied by her immediate acceptance of William's love, the redactor has stated it bluntly and directly:-

"I wol here-after witerly wip-oute more strive,
 Wirche holly mi hertes wille, to harde & to nesche,
 & leye my lous on þat lud, lolly for euere.
 To God here I gif a gift, it gete schal neuer oþer,
 Wile him lasteþ þe liif my loue I him grante!"

(11.533-37.)

Once the heroine has come to terms with her heart the English version returns to the sequence of her earlier colloquy, where she reflects on

the practical dilemma in which it has placed her (F: 538-49 / E: 538-73). How is William to learn of her love for him? She dare not tell him, -he would think her mad. And both versions use the same image to express her miserable condition:-

"Or va ma nœ sans gêneral Si va par haute mer rajant; Sans mast, sans voiles, sans light. Mais le laist à bonport venir!"	"I sayle now in pe see an schipbouterest, Boute anker or ore or ani seail, the agle But heilb house king to gobleman's reseris, Opar lankes willif dayer wip-fine a liltan!"
(ll. 946-9.)	(ll. 567-70.)

Why should the English redactor have been at such pains

to combine two widely separated passages in this way? He had reason to be dissatisfied with the sequence of the original. Malior's first soliloquy is wistful but inconclusive and does nothing to advance the plot, while the second shows her still unsure of her feelings immediately before accepting William. By his rearrangement the alliterative poet has given point to Malior's soul-searching by allowing her to reason away the objections to the match so that we know what her decision will be when the opportunity to declare her love occurs, and the action need not be delayed by admitting doubts at the last moment. The result is dramatically more effective and more convincing in human terms than the original version, and the means by which it has been achieved suggest that the redactor was not without artistic resource. By interweaving, rather than merely combining, the two monologues he has achieved a more coherent sequence of thought in which the two themes are significantly related. Malior reasons: "My heart has betrayed me, -and yet the object of my love is a worthy one, so I will trust my heart and obey its dictates!"

But though the passage was well planned the clumsiness with which it has been carried out has done much to spoil the total effect. The point at which the English poet returned to the sequence of the first soliloquy is marked in both versions by a momentary inter-

jection of the narrator(F: 908-9 / E: 487-90)and a change of topic. The heroine reflects that she ought not to blame her heart for something which gives her no much pleasure; henceforth she will obey it without question. The passage in the original is brief(F: 909-31),but the redactor, having previously used it as an introduction to his eulogy of William(E: 491-7),uses it again at greater length as a conclusion to this phase of the monologue(E: 516-37). The effect of these unnecessary repetitions is to suggest,contrary to the skill with which the sequence has been planned,that the alliterative author was unsure of himself, fumbling for expression and unable to judge when he had achieved his purpose.

Throughout the remainder of the love-episode he has been less ambitious,following the sequence of the French,with only occasional independence in minor matters. His version makes no use of a passage in which the original author comments upon Melior's sufferings(F: 950-70),-a reasonable economy in view of the attention already given to them in the heroine's own account-,but gives a full account of the physical symptoms which attract Alisaudivine's attention (F: 571-83 / E: 571-89),adding a few details of her concern for her cousin. The succeeding section,in which Melior confesses her love-lorn condition(F: 984-1076 / E: 590-628),provides a good example of the manner in which the English poet conducts his redaction when he chooses to adhere closely to the original. The general content and the sequence of ideas is identical in both versions,yet in any particular passage their relationship is partly disguised,not merely by linguistic differences but by the divergent verbal and syntactical requirements of two verse forms so essentially different. For example:-

Quant Maline vint la belle,
 La parole de la puelle
 Qui si li promet et devoie
 Et poroffre le sien service
 Dequandquels paroit li motz,
 Unkes n'espere de ce paroit.
 De mult bon cuer l'acordez,
 Surforment li plest et agee
 La parole qu'ale a oie.
 Si li respont: "Madame amie,
 Bele cousine, douce chiere,
 Voirement sai de grant malice
 Aigrie de tres grant malage.
 Mais tuz estes et preus et sage
 Et France et vaillans et cortois
 Et sai tuz que ferez vos pises
 De cest mal qui est fort d'amaie,
 Que tot mon cuer va d'ad'ore."

(11.1013-30.)

This somewhat vague relationship is as close as the two texts come to identity of expression, and even where the alliterative poet follows the French narrative in general outline he frequently takes liberties with fact as well as with phraseology. For example, the role which *Alisauadrine* plays in the love intrigue has been curiously altered in one respect. In both versions the confidante promises her mistress a herb which will rid her of love-longing, but secretly considers how to inform William of Melior's feeling for him (F: 1077-1116 / E: 629-52). The French poet comments laconically:-

Mais par tans le cavra, je suit.

(1.1117.)

and proceeds to describe the dream in which William's love is aroused by a vision of Melior (F: 1118-83). The English redactor, however, credits *Alisauadrine* with magic powers and makes her responsible for the vision:-

Ful conyng was sche & coynt & coupe fele pinges,
 Of charmes & of chauntemens to schewe aarde castles;
 So purȝn. pe craft pat sche coupe, to carpp pe sope,
 As William pat worpi child on a niȝt slept,
 Houte burn in his bour but him-self one,
 A ful selcoupe sweuene set sche him to mete;

(11.653-8.)

and this is not an isolated occurrence: when Melior again refers to the herb Alisaundrine replies vaguely that she has not yet been able to obtain it (F: 1350-55). The English poem reproduces this rather pointless passage (ll: 797-802), and thereafter nothing more is heard of the mysterious herb in either version. But when the two ladies come upon William asleep in the garden and he is awakened by dreaming that Melior gives him a rose which calms his torment (F: 1450-9), the alliterative text attributes this vision also to Alisaundrine's magic arts:-

Alysaundrine pan a-non attlede here pouȝtea,
 a wittly wip here whiles dede William to mete
 Pat pat time him pouȝt pat Melior þe hende
 And Alysaundrine al-one com him þo tille,
 & þe mayde Melior ful mekly him brouȝt
 A ful real rose and redly it him takes.
 (ll. 361-6.)

This hint of witchcraft is not out of place in a romance where a werwolf plays such a prominent part, but this interpretation of Alisaundrine's role seems contrary to the normal process of development in which the later redactions tend to rationalise supernatural elements so far as the plot permits. It is quite possible that Michelant's text of Guillaume de Palerne represents such a redaction and that the English version was translated from a slightly more primitive form of the poem in which Alisaundrine still retained some remnants of her original magic powers.⁽¹⁾ This, indeed, may explain her knowledge of herbs, though in the extant French poem her promise to provide one which will relieve Melior of her low-sickness is immaterial with her secret intention of bringing the lovers together. If, however, we accept that the English

1) It has been suggested that the various animal disguises employed by the lovers and by Queen Felice were originally actual transformations similar to the enchantment of the werwolf. See K.W. Tibbals, "Magic in the Romance of William of Palerne", *Mod. Phil.*, I, Chicago, 1904, pp. 358-9. Alisaundrine, who procures the bear-skin, may well have been the agent of the enchantment in an earlier form of the romance.

redactor was responsible for the element of magic here, he may well have invoked it to resolve this contradiction by clarifying Alisaundrine's motives and showing her at work to make a match between William and Melior. The narrative sequence which arises naturally from this association of cause and effect was well planned, but marred in execution by the fact that it conflicts with an earlier innovation made by the alliterative poet. In Guillaume de Palerne Melior seeks Alisaundrine's aid in forgetting a love which she has judged unworthy of her, but as the English version has already brought her to the point where her only thought is how to reveal her love to William, the herb can have no function there and the redactor would have been well advised to omit all reference to it.

In both versions the earlier of the two dreams has the same function: to awaken William's love for Melior. The French text, however, has some erotic details which are not in the English:-

Puis li baisoit, ce li ert vis,
Et touche et nua et lax et vis;
Et il li tot si faitement,
Com sel tenist apertement
Tot nu a nu entre sa brace,
Li rebaisoit la sois face,
Son col le blanc et sa poitrine.
Sauve l'onor a la meschine,
Souvant embrace l'orillier,
Quant Melior oide baisier;
Sovent entre ses bras l'a pris,
Sovent l'estraint centre son pis,
Soventes fois l'acole et baise,
Ne set en quel lieu nix li plaise;
(11.1145-58.)

The alliterative text, on the other hand, dwells on the incongruous detail of the pillow which William clamps in his sleep:-

pat puluere clept he curteisly & kust it ful ofte,
& made per-wip þe most merþe þat ani man schold;
But þan in his saddest solas seftli he a-waked.
Ak so liked him his layk wip þe ladi to pleie,
þat after he was a-waked a ful long þrowe,
He wende ful witerly aþe were in is armes;
Ac Peter! it nas but is puluere, to proue þe soþe.
(11.675-81.)

The love soliloquy which immediately follows is divided into two parts. The redactor has patiently followed his original through the first of these (F: 1184-1240 / B: 652-730), in which William reflects on the impossibility of one who has neither kin nor friends to plead his suit gaining the love of an emperor's daughter. The second, much shorter, section (F: 1254-70), in which the hero speaks of himself as stricken by love like a hunted bear, has left no trace in the English version. It is much more effective than the rambling reflections which precede it, but after some 40 lines of such matter the alliterative poet may have felt that he had done ample justice to the lover's feelings. His description of William's sufferings as he sits day after day gazing up at Melior's window (F: 1271-1336 / B: 731-82), bears very much the same relation to the original, giving a faithful, even repetitive rendering of the emotional details, but paraphrasing the account of how the hostess at his lodging tempts the hero to eat (F: 1300-36 / B: 766-75) so vaguely as to lose the human interest which, in the French version, relieves a somewhat tedious passage of love-longing.

This combination of repetitions and abbreviations suggests a redactor not fully in control of his material, and what follows shows something of the same inability to distinguish between essentials and incidentals. When Melior and Alisaundrine come into the garden the French version makes a conventional reference to the beauty of the setting which the English poet has elaborated far in excess of its function-

Ans el vergier vont ombreant,
Les fleurs, les herbes repandant,
Del rousignol cent les ois,
De la tortrele et del maris;
Ferment li plats et talente.
Assises sont deus un ois
Qui mult estoit bele et raine,
Et deus Nave vers et d'un.

(11.1373-86.)

& whan þe gaye gerles were in-to þe garden come,
Faire floures þei founde of felowship howes,
þat swete werð of sauor & to þe siȝt gode;
& eche busch ful of briddes þat blisliche song,
Boye þe þrusch & þe þruste bi myȝt of boþe,
Meladen hi mery in maner of here kinde.
& alle freliche foules þei on þat fryp songe,
For meryte of þat myȝte þei made noon þeȝe,
To glade wiþ uch gode þat here ȝis herde.

(11.816-24.)

But immediately afterwards he marks the subtlety of the French in his haste to reach a climax in the action. Alixandrine, recognising William asleep under a tree, points him out to Melior as though he were a stranger and, judging the state of her heart by the way in which she changes colour, urges her to go to him (F: 1390-1436), but the Melior of the English version no sooner sees William than she runs to him without encouragement from anyone (E: 834-51). After the directness of this episode it is somewhat surprising that the redactor has left Alixandrine to question William while Melior listens to the account of his symptoms, faithfully translated from the French and inevitably including much which the reader already knows (F: 1478-1562 / E: 888-925). A much briefer version might have served the practical function of the original, which is to show Melior that William is in the same plight as herself. Yet, in contrast, intelligent planning on the redactor's part has meant that Melior's brief comment on the situation (F: 1563-73 / E: 926-39) is the only part of her second soliloquy which remains to be dealt with at this point. Its isolation gives it added emphasis, and the alliterative poet, by expanding it verbally, underlines the only remaining obstacle to an understanding between the young lovers:-

"But wellaway! pat he ne wist what wo y drye,
 & haue do lolly for is loue, a wel long while!
 & but he wistly wits, y-wisse, y am done;
 For y dar nouȝt for schame schewe him mi wille,
 But ȝif he wold in ani wise him-self schewe forȝest"
 (11.935-9.)

The barrier of reserve is broken by Alixandrine, who, at William's request, pleads his cause with Melior and then discreetly leaves them in each others' arms until the approach of night forces them to part. The redactor, recognising a climax in the action, has

given a full account of the original(F: 1627-1732 / E: 940-1066), omitting nothing of importance and elaborating some details imaginatively. One of his additions shows a pleasant sense of humour: Alianorine, when she returns to find the lovers in an embrace, refers slyly to the herb which she had promised Melior for her relief:-

"Hauc je geten pe gras pat I jou geynliche nist?
I trowe trewll be pis time your sorwe be passed;
Elper of Jou,as y leue, is god lache til oper,
Alle pe surgyens of Salerne so sone ne coupen
Hauc your langoures a-legget,I leue for sope"(ll.1030-4.)

It is possible,of course,that the alliterative author found this detail in a variant form of the original,but it is more in keeping with the spirit of the English poem than with the somewhat earnest manner in which the French author treats the love element throughout the whole of this episode.

With the establishment of mutual understanding between the lovers only the practical difficulties remain to be solved. A reader experienced in the conventions of the roman courtois might well expect a further sequence of love episodes,secret assignments,frustrations, emotional analyses and renewals of vows. In Guillaume de Palerne, however,the conventional development is inhibited,first by the rebellion of the Duke of Saxony,which parts the lovers temporarily,and then by the proposed match between Melior and the Grecian prince,which threatens to part them for ever. The author has found occasion for only one brief interview between them(F: 2519-37 / E: 1392-1403)in the interim. An opportunity to revive the theme of the conflict between love and duty occurs when,at the news of the Emperor's consent to the Grecian alliance, William falls ill and Melior debates with herself the propriety of visiting her servant publicly. But the struggle between love and honour

is brief (F: 2787-2800), and the English redactor has chosen to ignore it in favour of some frank advice from Alixandrine (E: 1517-21). The eventual interview between the lovers (F: 2801-86 / E: 1522-88) is practical rather than sentimental in effect: they renew their vows, and, when Melior's wedding is about to be celebrated, they appeal in desperation to Alixandrine. She devises the means by which they escape together, and from this point until their marriage, almost at the end of the romance, William and Melior are companions in adventure rather than lovers, and the poet is too preoccupied with their escapes, disguises and journeyings to pay any further attention to their emotional relationship.

The love element in Guillaume de Palerme is, therefore, strictly localised, but, within the limited section devoted to it, the English redactor has apparently been faithful to his original in most respects. He has accepted the classic pattern of events: the conception of love by each of the lovers ~~initially~~, the timidity which prevents them from avowing their feelings, and the intervention of a go-between to bring them together. He has adopted the conventions of emotional expression used by the French author: the self-analyses to which the lovers submit their feelings, and the descriptions of the physical symptoms, -sighing and sleeplessness, change of colour and loss of appetite-, which attest the violence of their passion. But his version betrays some impatience with the most characteristic of these conventions, -the soliloquy of emotional reflection. Significantly, she has not omitted Melior's two monologues, but, by interweaving them, has attempted to give her train of thought a more logical development, leading to a practical decision with a bearing on the action. In the content as in the context

of this reconstructed monologue he has emphasised practical considerations at the expense of the more esoteric elements in the French text. For example, in his version it is not the voice of Love which convinces Melior of William's worthiness but her own observation of his behaviour and her shrewd guess as to the mystery of his origin. Something of the same desire to provide an explanation, rational or irrational, for developments in the action may possibly underlie his divergence from the extant version of the French poem in the matter of ~~William's love~~ ^{William's} ~~love~~ ^{love} ~~originates~~ ^{originates} abruptly and accidentally. Considered individually these are relatively minor changes, but collectively they suggest an approach to the element of love which is in significant contrast to the spirit of the original: "...der englische Bearbeiter die küsserlichen motive zu sehr betont und für die tieferen regungen des hertzen kein grosses verständnis hat" ⁽¹⁾

This difference in emphasis is reflected in the contrasting atmosphere and tone of the two versions, the French more in keeping with the conventions of amour courtois, the English more forthright and realistic. But the contrast is by no means clear-cut. Contrary to what one might expect, the alliterative poet has omitted some of the human details, - the attempts of William's hostess to persuade him to eat, for example, - which relieve the artificiality of the original. And, on the other hand, he has not reproduced the full extent of the soliloquies, the descriptions of love-languing, or the images used by the French author to express the violence of passion. Yet, despite omissions and abbreviations and the defective opening of the episode, the

1) E. Kaluzs, loc. cit., p. 257.

love-scenes in the English poem are rather longer than in the French version.⁽¹⁾ There are no lengthy additions to account for this difference in scale. It is due almost entirely to a fundamental contrast between the types of expression entailed by the French and English verse forms. The octosyllabic couplet is a relatively plastic and expressive medium and the author of Guillaume de Palerne has handled it with considerable freedom, giving it movement and flexibility and frequently varying his treatment of it in keeping with the varying subject-matter of the romance. The more restricting criteria of the alliterative line make it a more rigid, less accommodating medium, which has clearly inhibited the English poet in attempting to follow his original faithfully, reproducing each of the ideas so rapidly sketched in the French. The contrast is particularly evident in the conversations and soliloquies which make up such a large part of the love episode. The French version is lively and volatile, posing queries and answering them within the same line, in a way which the less elastic alliterative verse can imitate only in a more ponderous, slow-moving version:-

Ele li dist tot souavet:	Bot Alysaundrine wiste wel what pat he afed.
"Por Dieu, siroge fetez vus?"	& seide to him soberly pise selve words:
"Belo, je n'ir tot a estreue?"	"Swete William, seie me now whatadnes peguned?
"Morés?" "Vore, je n'ir en fin.	Pi faire howe is difide for Pisscha sore;
Se Diex ne prunge a boine fin,	& 3if ich nist in answer pe anode, y wold?
Belo, ne quit que vore un nede?"	pan William wittly in pis wise answered,
"Estes vus dont al tré doctois,	Sikende sal sally for sor at his hart,
Biax chere amie?" fait la pucele.	"Mi dere gods damisele, my sop is al jare,
"Certes, ma douce damoisele,	So a botteles bale me byndep so harde,
Oil, mesde plus que ne dit?	Me neux feller feuer pat euer frek hadde-
"Comment?" fait ele, "et il en est?"	For merthe & alle wates it makes me to love,
"Oily?" "Comment vus pissele d'esper?"	Slope, certes, may Yrouit, so sore d'ne greue.
"Par une mitige merveillesque	& al pis nochel meschef a mating I wite,
qu'ele avint a mon casiant?"	pat me com on a nist, a-cursed be pat tines
"Comment vus print?" "Bela, and d'ne?"	For so hard hauches haue hold me sepe,
"Et ou vus tient?" "Pis que voreci,	pat I not in pe world what is me to rede?"

1) The French version is complete in 1031 octosyllabic verses while the mutilated English text numbers 633 alliterative long lines.

"Bele, par tout le cors de moi!" "Howe'er, so the Alisaundrine," seems in what wise
 "Par tot le cors?" "Hire!" "Comment?" Pat pat hache pe haldes, & how it pe take?"
 "Une merveille grans neurent" "I-wissee? seide William," "I wol it noujt layne,
 Qui mult ne tiert un grant desceinte" Sum-time it hentis me up hite ashot as an fire,
 Une eure s'ichaut, unrelaxat frott; But quicliche se bene a colicome per-after;
 Une eure su, et autre trambles; Sum time I sit & kinge samen to-geder,
 Li ouers de moi se part et emble: & Pan so Proli pouter purlen un herte,
 Ne sai ou va, ne sai ou vient. Pat I ne wot in pe world where it li-comes,
 Ne sai qui est qui le retient. For I pil in my-self y fole it noujt pannel!
 Sovent ne bat, sovent ne lance, Panne Alisaundrine a-non per-after seide,
 Sovent ne fait au cuer pesance, "William, I wold pe pray peow neweldest tale
 Sovent baail et estondeil, Bi what can al pi our comed be a sweuans?"
 Et petit dorm et sovent veil. "Hui sertes, sertes," he sude, p' stadul Inuer,
 Penses m'ocit tot et enue. For ne meacher on moids pat me may falle!
 Penses? Ne fuitis me fuitire. I haue leuer it layne & pis langur pole,
 Se de penser ne ne pousse, Pejh I for dreeing offis and dais at pe last,
 Siega que mors et finés fuses, Parachal me with o pe woldite and it comed!"
 Car ne puis boire ne mangier. (11.888-920.)¹⁾
 Bele, per moi esbanoier
 Sui ere oi illuec venus.
 Quinze jors a passés et plus
 Ne dormi tant comecor dorme!
 "Certes, mult volentiers amais!"
 Dist la pucele, "l'ochelison
 Comment vos prist et comment non
 Cie maus qui si vos a destruit!"
 "Bele", fait il, "as vos amuit,
 Que tant que l'aved ome amuit
 Home ne fene nel dirai!"
 (11.1482-1526)

The atmosphere generated by the mercurial style of the French is most suited to the treatment of love, but the more stolid English is not without a certain charm. The prominence which its emphatic expression gives to minor details,—such as the affection which William lavishes on his pillow,—and the air of unmotivated directness created by its occasional omissions,—as with Melior's rush to meet William in the garden,—combine to produce an impression of variety which is quite appropriate to the story of youthful love. And there is a pleasant undertone of humour not to be found in the French romance, whose author views love as a serious matter: in some instances it may be unintentional, but incidental touches,—such as Alisaundrine's sly allusion to the

1) For further examples see: F: 862-98 / E: 454-77; F: 1185-1240 / E: 690-730; F: 1665-1702 / E: 967-1001.

lovers' therapeutic effect upon each other, suggest that the degree of verbal independence imposed upon the alliterative poet by the nature of his medium may have led him unconsciously to express something of his own, less sophisticated attitude to matters of sentiment.

Though he is no less faithful to the original in his treatment of adventurous incident, here, too, the English redactor has found opportunities to express personal tastes and interests. And in this context such self-expression is deliberate rather than an incidental result of the inadaptability of the French and English verse forms. The contrast between octosyllabic couplet and alliterative long line is less apparent in direct narration of events than in the expression of complex emotional states, and the English poet has been able to reproduce his original more closely, without the same degree of verbal inflation. The passage in which he gives the early history of *Alphonse the werwolf* (F: 274-340 / E: 109-69) provides an example in point. The French narrative moves rapidly and its situations are not complicated by incidental detail, so that the alliterative poet has been able to follow it with comparative ease and accuracy:-

Li leus warox dont je vos di	Werwolf was he non wox of kinde,
N'iert mie beste par nature,	Ac kowen was he of kun pat kud was ful nobly;
Si com raconte l'escriture;	For þe kud king of Spayne was kindly his fader.
Ançois ert hom et fir a ro	He gat him, as God þat grace, on his fert wyne,
Et sai ves bien dire porci,	& at þe burp of Pattera þe bold lady dayde.
Com li avint et qui li fist.	Þippen þat kud king so bi his conseyl wroht,
Si com l'entree le nos dist,	Another wif þat he wedded a warchipful ladi,
Il estoit fix le roi d'Espagne	þe princees douȝter of Portingale, to þe þe noþe
De sa feme la premeraine.	But l'entree þat ladi in þe þe hadde l'entree schene,
De lui estoit morte sa mere;	For al þe werk of wichecraft wi y-nouþ the couþe,
Feme reprist le roises pere,	Hede hadde þe namere of nigrumancy to lere.
Fille le roi de Portingale.	Of coninge of wiche-craft wi y-nouþ þe couþe,
Mult sot la dame engien et mal :	þe þe was þat bold quene of þe þe y-ole þe.
Sorteries et ingremance	(11.109-21.)
Avoit mult apris des'enfance.	
Bien sai que Brant fu nune.	
(11.274-89.)	

But even in such an episode the English version shows some verbal expansion, though without introducing anything extraneous.

This early passage indicates the general nature of the redaction so far as its treatment of adventures incidents, the major component in the French romance, is concerned. There are no large-scale additions or omissions, the English version painstakingly adheres to the sequence of the original, and the narrative maintains a more or less constant balance with the French, without drastic abbreviation or excessive expansion. There are, however, a number of passages in which some slight deviation from this norm can be detected; where the alliterative text shows a looser relationship to its source and a greater degree of verbal inflation than is usually involved. The incident which opens the second section of the English poem, William's first meeting with the Emperor of Rome (F: 341-528 / E: 170-383), is a case in point. There is no difference in content between the French and English narratives. Both relate how, as William kept his foster-father's cattle in the forest, the werwolf lured the Emperor away from a hunting party and led him to the child, and how, learning that the boy was a foundling, he determined to have him educated at court. But there is a marked difference in proportion: the French text gives the incident in 287 verses; the alliterative version occupies 213 lines of almost double length. This difference of scale is due in large part to the insistence of the alliterative poet upon stating certain ideas in the original as emphatically as possible, by repetition and elaboration, rather than by the addition of extraneous matter. The details upon which he has concentrated in this way have a certain community of interest. The French author describes how William was beloved by his forest companions for his generosity of nature, and

the redactor stresses the sound practical basis for their feelings towards him:-

La nuit quant a l'ostal repaire, Whanne he went hom echs nigt wip is droun of berte,
Vient t'eschargies li danoisier He con him-self y-charged wip caryng & hares,
De lievres, de conins, d'oiesier Wip fessans & fylling wip por foules grete;
Et de pertriset de faismes. Pat pe herde & his hande wif & al his hole neyne
Mult ert amés de tes enfans, Pat bold barn wip his bowe by pat time fedde.
Car quant ses oisier avoit pris & 3if halle felle felle wip forest echs day,
Porren dedint et porren pris, 3ong bold barnes pat bestes al-so kaped.
Ses compaignons les condit bres & blife was echs a barn he best wip him plese,
Ja n'en retentat a son use & felle him for his fredom & for his faire peres.
De si quetot cil en avoient For what King William was a-day wip his bowe,
Qui en sa compaignie estoient. Were it fepered foul or fowre-fetted best,
Mult leur estoit bons et entiax, He wold pis William neuer on wip-bold to him-selue,
Et mult le faisoit volentiers, Til alle his felines was first fedde to here pale.
Car drois le sement et nature So kynde & so corteys conssed he pere,
Qui pousse toute creature Pat alle lodes him lousde pat loked on him on
A son droit et a son usage. & blissed pat him bare & brought in-to pis worlde,
(11.370-85.) So moche caried & nurye schewed pat child euere.

(11.181-97.)

Again, when the Emperor asks him to fetch the cowherd, William refuses until assured that no harm is intended him, and the English version emphasises the child's concern for his supposed father by extending this idea:-

"Ac peraventure purth Goddis grace to gode may it turne,
For-pi bring him hider, faire barn, y preye"
"I schal, sire", seide pe child, "for saffliche y hope
I may worche on 3our word to wite him fro harm."
"Ja, saffliche", seide peemperour, "so God 3if me loie!"
(11.254-8.)

And where the French version merely mentions that William weeps on learning that he is a foundling, the English adds a speech in which he expresses his feelings for his foster-parents:-

Whan William pis worpi child wist pe so pe,
And knew pat pe cowherde nas nou3t his kinde fader,
He was wittliche a-wondered & gan to wepe sore,
& seide saddely to him-self sone per-after,
"A! gracious gode God! pou3 grettest of alle!
Moen is pi mercy & pi mi3t, pi menake, & pi grace!
Now wot I neuer in pis world of whan y am come,
Ne what destene me is di3t, but God do his wille!
Ac wel y wot witerly wip-oute ani faile,
To pis man & his meke wif most y am holde3
For pei ful faire han me fostered & fed a long time,
pat God for his grete mi3t al here god han 3elde"
(11.303-19.)

The redactor has also made much of the passage in which the cowherd passes on to William the good advice for his conduct in life given to him by his own father(F: 544-81 / B: 328-44), and has added a few lines in which the boy's sorrow at the parting is removed by his delight in riding behind the Emperor on horseback:-

þe child weped al-way wonderliche fast,
But þemperour had god game of þat gomes lore,
& comande þe couherde curtayali and fayre,
To haue vp þat hande child bi-hinde him on his stede.
& he so dede deliuerly, Þouȝh him del. Þouȝt,
& bi-kenned him to Crist þat on croice was peyned.
Þanne þat barn as billue by-gan for to glade
þat he so realy schuld ride, & redell as swipe
Ful curteisale of þe couherde he caces his leue.
(11.342-53.)

And he has retained William's farewell message to his forest playmates, even though their names cause havoc in the alliterative verse and he, or his copyist, was apparently puzzled by some of the forms in his source,-which may, however, have been corrupt:-

"Salut moi Huet le rain, "A gode air, for Godes leue, also grte^d w^d oft
Et Hugenet et Aubelot, Alle my frelihs felawes þat to þis forest longe,
Et Martinet le fil Neugot, Han partilȝhe in many places pleide wi^d ofte,
Et Akarin et Crestien, Hugonet, & Huet, þat hende litel dwon",
Et Thumassin le fil Paen & Aubelot, & Martynet, Hugones gnie sone;
Et toz mes ~~autres compaignons~~ & þe Cristen Akarin þat was mi kyn fore,
(11.594-9.) & þe trewe kinnerman þe payenag sone;
& alle o^r ar frely felawes þat þou faire knowes,
at God mak hem gode men, for his mochel grace!
(11.359-67.)

In general the redactor has concentrated on those incidents in the original sequence which express the good-hearted simplicity of the cowherd, the naivety of William and his genuine affection for his foster-parents. His version stresses the human background to the action, and the natural emotions involved, rather than the elements of most importance for the development of the plot, paying comparatively little attention, for example, to the account of how the fowling was discovered;

the rich clothing in which he was dressed, etc. (F: 485-511 / B: 288-96), and recasting it as reported speech, for the sake of brevity. Elsewhere in the alliterative work where the degree of verbal expansion is greater than normal, it is usually in scenes which have a potential human interest of this kind. At the end of the story, for example, when William has been restored to his heritage, he sends for the cowherd and his wife and rewards them for their kindness (F: 9385-430 / B: 5359-97). The English redactor has not introduced anything foreign to the French poet's conception of the passage, but he has almost doubled its length, taking an obvious pleasure in detailing the rewards heaped on the faithful couple, and adding to the original grant of a rich castle:-

.....al pat touched parto, -a tidi erldome, (l.5384.)

He shows an equal interest in William's magnanimity towards the ladies, Glorinde and Iselone, who plotted to kill him in infancy, when they come, dressed in sackcloth, to throw themselves on his mercy (F: 8339-98 / B: 4767-806).

These are scenes in which human interest is largely an incidental element. In others it is integrated with the action, which turns upon human reactions, and, here too, the English author's interest in such situations is reflected by a somewhat fuller treatment of them in his redaction. He appears to have been particularly intrigued by the way in which those who are not in the secret react to the various animal disguises assumed by the hero and heroine. As William and Melior escape from the Emperor's palace, encased in white bear-skins, they are seen by a Greek attendant on the wedding embassy:-

Pei went a-wai a wallop as pei wod seemed.
 & naly wod of his witt he wax ne13 for drede,
 & fled as fast homward as fet mi3t drie,
 For he wend wittarly pei wold him haue sewed,
 To haue mad of him mete & murpered him to depe.

(l. 1770-74.)

The alliterative version doubles the original passage (F: 3145-66 / E: 1764-85), dwelling on the terrors of the Greek, not with any serious purport, but rather in the jocular spirit of his fellows to whom he recounts what he has seen:-

þanne were his felawes fain for he was adradde,
& lauded of þat gode layk; (ll.1763-4.)

And later, when the lovers are missed and the French text recalls this incident, the English version brings the Greek before the Emperor to enlarge on the terrifying appearance of the bears (F: 3792-804 / E: 2154-73). When, in their flight, William and Melior take refuge in a quarry and are discovered asleep there by the workmen, (F: 3930-75 / E: 2241-77) there is a further opportunity for the redactor to dwell on human reactions to the unexpected. He has expanded the single speech of the original, in which one of the quarrymen announces that these are the bears for whose capture the Emperor has promised a reward, into a lively exchange amongst his workmates, who swear to stand guard fearlessly while he fetches help. Nothing of any importance is added, but the alliterative version gains momentary independence from its source, and expressed itself with a colloquial freedom appropriate to this particular context. Finally, there is something of the same ease and naturalness about the brief scene (F: 5309-29 / E: 3175-92) in which the Queen of Sicily calms the fears of her waiting-maid when she sees her mistress accompanied by William and Melior, all three disguised in deer-skins. In each instance the redactor, by emphasising the human context has given an air of conviction to some of the more improbable moments of the story. It would not be advisable to exaggerate the importance of these momentary variations in the pace and intensity of his redaction, but it is, perhaps, significant that they involve scenes of this kind

and that their effect tends to this particular end.

It is notable that they represent extensions and variations of material contained in the original, and that in no instance has the redactor drawn on his own invention to any significant extent. This is true also of the only incident in which the English version appears to have made a substantial addition to the matter of the original. It occurs when the fugitive lovers, disguised as hart and hind and galled by the werwolf, cross the Straits of Messina to Palermo (F: 4561-684 / B: 2713-555). They secretly board a vessel in the harbour of Reggio and conceal themselves among the cargo. On nearing the Sicilian coast, the werwolf creates a diversion to cover the lovers' landing by leaping ~~swimming~~, swimming ashore and making off pursued by the ship's crew. Up to this point (F: 4615 / B: 2766) the English redaction follows the French with its usual fidelity, but there follows a short scene (B: 2767-91) for which the original provides no warrant. As William and Melior creep from their hiding-places they are discovered by the only member of the crew left on board, the ship's boy:-

But whan pe boie of pe barge pe bestis of-sele,
He was neiþ wod of his witt, witow, for fere,
& be-Pou3t him þere pe beastes for to quelle.
& happill to pe hinde he hit þanne forrest,
& set hire a sad strok so sore in pe necke,
Pat sone top ouer tail tumbled ouer pe haches.
But pe hart ful hastill hent hire vp in armes,
& bare hire forþ ouer-bord on a brod planke,
& nas bold wip pe boie no debate make,
But fayn was a-way to fle for fere of no gastes,
Fer away fro pe see or he stynt wold.

(11.2771-31.)

The scene closes with a momentary reversion to the sequence of the French text, in the prayer which the lovers, after making good their escape, offer for the safety of the werwolf (F: 4616-32 / B: 2792-2804).

This is immediately followed by a further interpolation(S: 2805-29), in which the boy tells his ship-mates of his encounter with the two deer, who leapt ashore and went off on two feet. Finally, the two vassals come together again in their account of how William and Melior take refuge in the royal park under the walls of Palermo, where they are rejoined by the werewolf(P: 4633-84 / S: 2830-55).

This occurrence, unique in William of Palermo, might be explained either as an original addition by the English author or as a variant in which his text of Guillaume de Palerne differed from the copy which has survived. If it represents an afterthought by some French redactor he was careful to insert a second reference to the incident at the point where Alphonse, freed from his enchanted form as the werewolf, recounts the various adventures in which he had helped the lovers, since the English version again mentions the encounter with the ship-boy during this recapitulation(S: 4698-701). Or if, on the other hand, it formed part of the original composition there seems no valid reason why the copyist who made the existing text should twice discriminate against this incident and this alone amongst many similar adventures. But it would not be difficult to see it as the work of the English author, striking out for once upon his own to add a further complication to the matter furnished by his original.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, his source itself might have furnished him with the model on which to create such

1) "Es ist freilich nicht unmöglich, dass diese abweichende Darstellung schon in eine spätere redaction des französischen gedichtes eingang gefunden hat, allein wahrscheinlicher ist doch, dass sie vom englischen bearbeiter herrührt. Nachdem derselbe schon die früheren abenteuer der beiden flüchtlinge mit grosser ausführlichkeit wiedererzählt hatte, will er nunmehr auch dieses letzte abenteuer möglichst ausschlecken und zu einem weit gefährlicheren umgestalten"(H. Kalusa, loc.cit.p.260.)

an episode. The situation when the lovers are confronted by the ship-boy is closely paralleled by that when they are trapped in the quarry (F: 4030-67 / B: 2332-56). As the searchers close in on them William wishes for weapons with which to make a break for freedom:-

"But God for his grete grace god I hadde now here
Horse & alle harneys pat be-houes to werre,
I wold wend hem tille wip-oute ani stint,
& do what I do miht or ich pe deth soffred;"

(11.2340-51.)

On the later occasion the alliterative poet has given his hero a speech which sounds very much like an echo:-

"Wold God for his grace & his grete miht,
pat I hadde here pat to werre falles,
pe boye pat pe barge James a-boye schold sore;
For pe dint ne pe dalt his dep were marked"

(11.2700-91.)

But, in effect, the parallel proves nothing, -except the tendency of the alliterative author to repeat verbal formulas wherever the similarity of narrative situations permitted. The repetition of a narrative motif cannot, with confidence, be attributed to the redactor since the original itself is characterised by just this kind of duplication. Guillaume de Palerne is constructed on a simple formula, involving a series of perils, -inevitably somewhat similar in nature-, to which hero and heroine are exposed, repeated use of a traditional plot-machinery of animal disguises and prophetic dreams to bring about these situations, and recapitulation of all the main incidents in Alphoun's final speech. Such an imitative complication as the encounter with the ship-boy is entirely in keeping with the principle on which the original romance was composed. And the issue has, in any case, no vital bearing on the evaluation of the English redaction: whether the redactor retained the incident from his source or invented it on the model of similar episodes there, his use of it is entirely in keeping with his attitude to the narrative of adventures

as a whole. His careful reproduction of all such incidents in the original and his expanded treatment of those in which the element of human interest is prominent (most notably those which, like the episode of the ship-boy, concern reactions to the animal disguises of the plot), suggest that the combination of improbable adventures and credible emotions in the French romance was entirely to his taste.

Had he translated all the episodes of Guillaume de Palerne with similar fullness the alliterative poem would have come near to equalling the 10,000 lines of the original. But he has discriminated between the central plot and incidents which are merely incidental to it, and his treatment of the latter does much to show where his interest in the romance was centered. The French text contains two long sequences dealing with warfare: the Duke of Saxony's rebellion against the Emperor (F: 1784-2410 / E: 1057-310), and the siege of Palermo by the King of Spain (F: 5459-7035 / E: 3261-534). Both are essential to the structure of the romance in that, by his exploits against the Duke, William demonstrates his inherent heroic ability, wins his knighthood, and shows himself worthy of the Emperor's daughter, while, by defeating the King he unknowingly rescues his own mother and wins back his heritage. But the original author treated them as having an interest of their own quite apart from their relevance to the hero's career, and his addiction to the repeated formula led him to duplicate a number of incidents in each and even to include similar situations within the same episode.

The English redactor, who dealt faithfully with such duplications in the body of the romance, has been less patient here, as his comparatively brief version of the two episodes suggests. His method

1) The French text devotes 627 and 1577 lines to the two episodes respectively; the English version 244 and 574 lines only.

of abbreviation appears somewhat erratic, yet sufficiently consistent to indicate that he had a specific aim in view. Passages in the original which relate the battle-scenes to the general theme of the romance and advance the action within the episode itself, such, for example, as the outbreak of the rebellion when the Emperor calls on his vassals to aid him against the Duke of Saxony, knights William and asks his advice in prosecuting the war (F: 1784-876 / E: 1067-1156), are retained at equal length in the alliterative version. General engagements between the massed forces of both sides, such as that which opens the attack in this instance (F: 1877-950 / E: 1157-65), are abbreviated in a brief outline, which gives the essence of the original without any of its descriptive detail. Only when William is mentioned does the English text fill out its source with any degree of verbal expansion, and this is true even here (F: 1951-92 / E: 1166-68), where he is not personally engaged in the struggle, but, moved by the Emperor's prayer for divine aid, is urging his companions to prove worthy of their knighthood. Typically, the general attack which follows (F: 1993-2034) has been omitted from the alliterative version, which, logically and effectively, continues to concentrate upon the hero, returning to the sequence of the original when he takes the field in person (F: 2035-142 / E: 1189-200). But even in dealing with events which reflect all credit on his hero the redactor often betrays impatience with the length at which they were originally narrated: the French recounts William's struggle with several knights in turn, naming each individually, (F: 2035-96), and describes his defeat of the Duke's nephew (F: 2097-142), whereas the English summarizes the action without descriptive detail of any kind:-

William wiþ his owne hond so wiþtliche pleide,
 Pat he slow six of þe grettest, soþ forto telle,

& pat. dou3tiest were of dede of þe dukes ost.
 pat on was his newew, a nobul kni3t of armes,
 pat oþer was his stiward, pat sti3tled al his meyne.
 þe oþer were lordes of pat lond lilly of þe best.
 (11.1195-1200.)

The remainder of the battle-sequence concentrated upon William's personal exploits,--his capture by the enemy, rescue by his own men and encounter with the rebel Duke, whom he defeats and leads in submission to the Emperor (F: 2143-362 / E: 1261-68), but this, too, the redactor has abbreviated severely, omitting the description of violent action which enlivens the French narrative. The practical outcome of the war, the final flight of the rebel army, and general submission to the Emperor (F: 2363-410 / E: 1265-1310), though it makes duller reading, is given at greater length than in the original, and so assumes undue importance in its abbreviated context. The sequence as a whole suggests that the English author attached more importance to the issue of the war than to the action it involves, that he tolerated the latter only where it displays the hero in a favourable light, and that even then he was only prepared to give the essence of the French narrative and not to translate it in detail.

His handling of the later sequence, the siege of Palermo, suggests the same conclusion, and here he has employed an even greater degree of compression. The circumstances leading up to William's rescue of his mother are necessary for the appreciation of what follows, and are given at equal length in both versions (F: 4400-500 / E: 2620-94). But thereafter the English passes rapidly over everything preliminary to the hero's own appearance in the action, barely mentioning the devastated countryside and the besieging forces camped about the city (F: 4541-71 / E: 2830-1 & 2856-64), and omitting a preliminary attack upon it (F: 502-33). For the redactor the battle begins when William takes command of the Sicilian forces, but even in describing how he arms himself for the field

(F: 5459-573 / E: 3261-314), details of human interest, such as the humility with which the hero's horse kneels to him, occupy his attention to the neglect of more relevant military details. And when William rides out and defeats the Spanish seneschal in single combat (F: 5574-96 / E: 3315-98), the English version is comparable in length with the original, yet even here battle-field orations receive as much attention as the real business of warfare, and the combat is narrated rather than described. When the focus shifts to the opposing force, and the seneschal's nephew attempts to avenge his defeat (F: 5597-782 / E: 3399-428), the redaction becomes a mere outline of the original, returning to a more liberal version when he in turn is overthrown by William (F: 5783-801 / E: 3429-49).

In the French romance the battle continues at length, repeating the pattern of the earlier conflict: general attacks are interspersed with personal combats in which the hero, having killed the seneschal's nephew, as he had earlier killed the Duke's, now captures the Prince of Spain as he captured the Duke himself. The English version retains the pattern in its entirety, but increasingly abbreviates all episodes in which the hero is not personally involved. It omits entirely the Spanish king's exhortation to his flagging troops (F: 6485-92) and compresses two similar speeches into one (F: 6579-89 & 6722-30 / E: 3832-41); makes only the barest mention of general combat (F: 6549-69 / E: 3817-20) and of actions in which the enemy leader is prominent (F: 6570-688 / E: 3824-6); and virtually ignores the periodic fluctuations in the fortunes of both parties (F: 6639-704 / E: 3827-30). As a result, William's role becomes still more prominent, and to heighten the effect the English author has gone so far as to make minor alterations in the narrative outline; in the French text William retreats in the face of enemy reinforcements (F: 6238-72), but in the English he rallies his men successfully before

making a temporary retirement(E: 3635-51); and the enemy leader, instead of urging resistance to the death(F: 6907-42), faints with fear and flies from William before making a reluctant last stand(E: 3877-92). But even his wish to exalt the hero has not prevented the redactor from further reducing the scope of his version as the war nears its protracted end: William's defeat and capture of the Spanish prince is greatly abbreviated (F: 6156-237 / E: 3600-30) and his encounter with another enemy knight is summarised in a few lines(F: 6704-891 / E: 3842-66).

The contrast between these two battle-sequences and the remainder of the redaction is evident. The redactor who reproduced every incident in the wanderings of William and Melior, even those involving the repetition of earlier situations, did not find the same interest in military adventures. Recognising their relevance to the plan of the romance, he has paraphrased them, erratically and with signs of impatience, maintaining narrative continuity, but omitting much which was obviously designed to appeal to the tastes of the original French audience. He has done his duty by the hero, realising that convention makes military success an essential feature of his career, and has even tried to compensate for omissions and abbreviations by heightening William's role in some minor particulars. But his personal interest is excited by such bizarre incidents as the homage paid to William by his horse, not by the military action with which the original is chiefly concerned, and his relatively free redaction is evidence that his attention was less closely engaged than in the preparation of the faithful, if somewhat pedestrian, version characteristic of the remainder of the alliterative work. And, significantly, he has made little or no attempt to reproduce the descriptive passages in the French poem which gives the battle-sequences life and interest.

His approach is purely that of a narrator, summarising the descriptions by which the original author conveyed the violence of war in lines devoid of action and variety:-

Quant d'ambes pars s'entrechoisirent lani a bold burn was some broujt of laws,
Onques riens plus n'i atendirent, & many a stefstede stiked þere to deth,
Mais les escus a lor cox pendent, No man vpon mold miȝt ayme þe number
Poignent et brochent et destendent, Of wijes þat in a while were slayn on hope stille.
Tote la terre fount freidre. (11.3817-20.)

La veissies a lor venir
Tante anste fraindre et tantescu
Et tant haubere maille menu,
Tant elne a or quasser et fraindre
Et tant vassal a terre empaindre,
Noies lover, espées traire
Et gens entrechire et deffaire,
Testes et poins et piés voler,
L'un mort sor l'autre craventer,
Et la terre de sans couvrir
Et par le champ destriers fuir,
Resnes routes, seles sanglentes,
Dont gisent mortes les joventes
Dont li cheval les cors fouloient
Qui amonés les i avoient,
Par les presses, a grant dolor.
(11.6549-69.)

Even where the alliterative poet has made some attempt to reproduce the spirit of the original in such passages, the narrative element preponderates over the descriptive:-

At þe a-coupyng þe kniȝtes speres eiper brak moter,
Swiftli wiþ here swerdes swinge þei to-geder,
a dalten duelful dentes deliuerli þat stounde.
a William was þe wiȝtere a wel sarre smot,
a set so hard a strok sone after on þat oper,
Þurth helm a hed hastili to þe brest it grint.
þe sward swiftlii swenged þurth þe bode euen,
þat tit. ouer his hors-tail he tumbled ded to grounde.
(11.3438-45.)

And there is a ~~repetitive~~ ^{stagnant} quality in these attempts which betrays a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the redactor.⁽¹⁾

1) Compare, for example, 11.1152-65; 1189-1200; 1213-26; 1233-41; 3389-96; 3408-17; 3602-12; 3616-23.

The narrative and descriptive elements exercise conflicting claims upon the redactor's attention throughout the whole of Gaillaume de Palerne, but his reaction has not always been so clear-cut as in dealing with the battle-sequences. Descriptions of ceremonial have been retained, in most instances, at a length comparable with the original: the triple wedding (F: 2801-942 / E: 5001-76), for example, and William's coronation (F: 2332-80 / E: 5324-51). Yet even here he has tended to avoid reproducing the full extent of the details in his source, declaring himself unworthy of the task or suggesting that it is beyond the skill of any writer:-

Of here a-tir for to telle to badde is my witte,
For alle þe men vpon mold na miȝt it descriue
A-redill to þe riȝtes, so riche it were alle.
(11.5024-5.)¹⁾

This method of excusing his omissions has been more frequently employed in some contexts than in others, indicating, the redactor's preferences and dislikes. For the most part he has discriminated against descriptions of dress and armour. Though he has retained the passage in which William arms himself and his steed for battle (F: 5495-551 / E: 3275-98), his abbreviated version is largely concerned with the erratic behaviour of the horse. And he has given little space to the rich clothing prepared for Melior's wedding to the Prince of Greece (F: 3411-500 / E: 1930-64), still less to the dress of the Greek ambassadors (F: 2573-90 / E: 4126-3), excusing himself as though conscious that he has failed in his duty to his original:-

It were to for to telle al here atyr riche.
(1.1428.)

Even where dress has some bearing on the plot, in the scene where Alphonsus

1) Similar remarks include 11.941-6; 5005-7; 5344-8.

the werewolf, now disenchanting, is dressed again as a prince (F: 7926-49 / E: 4540-3) the redaction merely summarises the original descriptive account:-

A tant les garnemens ontpris. & William wi3tli with-oute any more,
 Chamise et brasse dolles Greipod him as gaili as any gon purt bene,
 Li ont vestues et chausies; Of alle trie a-tir pat to kni3t langed,
 Les chausies sont d'un paille oier So pat non out - menda mite worp, I wene.
 Qui bien sissent a chevalier; (11.4540-3.)
 Puis li vestent un siglaton:
 Ains plus riche ne vit nus hen.
 Les guescles as oer deugies
 Li ont les deus biars brachies;
 Puis s'est drecies en son ostage.
 Gent ot le cors et le visage,
 Les chevex blons et bien crouph,
 Trois les membres et bien forms.
 La roine li trait d'un coffre
 Une paiture, se li offre,
 A membres d'or merveilles riche.
 Li baze le gaint et puis s'afiche
 D'un freuil d'or merveilles bel.
 Au col li netent un mantel
 Qui mult li eist et bel et gent,
 Et tot si autre garnement.
 (11.7926-46.)

To all intents and purposes the feasts which inevitably figure in a romance of this kind receive the same summary treatment. But here the contrast between the two versions is less apparent, since the French author has not given these occasions anything comparable to the detailed attention which he paid to dress and ceremonial. His references to them curiously resemble the redactor's treatment of such detailed descriptions: they are narrative rather than descriptive, and the English poet has not added anything which could give them more interest or reality:-

De lor dangier por coi dirie? Thanne time was, to Pe note Pei turned sone,
 Tuit an orant a tel planté & served were welcoupli wilt as henwille,
 Que chascuns fist sa volenté; Of alle dere daintes of metes and of drynkes;
 (11.8680-2.) (11.4923-5.)¹⁾

Elsewhere the original has anticipated the redactor's method of avoiding

1) See also, F: 9305-11 / E: 5310-15.

such descriptions by declaring that his powers are not equal to the occasion:-

Ne sai que vos raconterois
Ne del mangier ne de la fies,
Ne des richoises qui le sont.
Je ne suit homme entel le mont,
Tant soit sages, nobles ne chens,
Ne des set ars parés ne cers,
Qu'il seust dire ne retraire;
For centan vol a itant taire.

(11.9373-80.)

For his no clerk with Crist at coupe half dozen
He requite Pat was added in Rome for pat fast,
Ne he tipdel of hire stir to telle pe rist;
For al he men vye with it amende ne mist,
Mout Pat fel to seche a fest, amepokell a nite.

(11.5344-8.)⁽¹⁾

In one or two instances, indeed, the redactor has been more specific than his source. Where the original reference to a festival is so general as to leave its nature vague the redactor's conception always includes eating and drinking:-

Tant ont eu trestot le soir & manli ~~made him attach~~ with all notes notul,
Com il ~~vulret~~ et au potphire; & wip ~~pe d'arropet~~ deinties of drinke, at were;
N'i voel autre devise faire. To munge more his nonal, multatied ~~pe janne~~.

(11.5402-4.)

(11.3208-10.)

And on three occasions, where the original narrative turns awkwardly and abruptly to a new incident, the English author has rounded off the earlier scene by stating, without descriptive elaboration, that all involved sat down to table:-

pus drine pei forp pe day with diuerse mirthes,
& treuli whan it was time turned to mete,
& serued were of serues as hem-self liked;
But speke we of pe Spaynols, what ~~hem~~ tidde after,

(11.3727-30.)⁽²⁾

This is evidence of his concern for the efficient conduct of the narrative but there is nothing here or elsewhere in the redaction to suggest that he had any interest in the description of such Festivities for their own sake.⁽³⁾

1) See also, F: 8928-36 / E: 5053-9.

2) See also, E: 3524-7; 4324-6.

3) Kalusa (loc. cit. p. 262) cites a number of incidental references, some without original counterparts, but they are mostly alliterative tags with only doubtful reference to feasting: 11.1338; 1382; 1388; 1466; 4851; 4944-5; 4967-70.

In contrast, there are some signs that the alliterative poet paid more attention to the natural setting of his story than the original author. He has expanded the description of the garden in which William and Melior meet (F: 1379-86 / E: 816-24), and elaborated the scene in which his foster-father discovers the child in the werwolf's den (F: 137-213 / E: 3-64), by describing the cowherd at rest in the sun:-

pe hard sat. Pan wip mound aþene þe mote sunne,
 Nouȝt fully a furlong fro þat fayre child,
 Clouȝtand kyndely his schon as to here craft falles.
 (11.12-14.)

and how William is tempted into the open by the beauty of the place:-

Louely lay it a-long in his lonely denne,
 & buskede him out of þe buschys þat were blowed grene,
 & leued ful louely þat lent grete schade,
 & briddes ful bremely on þe bowes ainge.
 What for melodye þat þei made in þe mey sesoun,
 þat litel child listely lorked out of his caue,
 Faire floures forto fecche þat he bi-fore him seye,
 & to gadere of þe grasses þat grene were a fayre.
 & whan it was out went so wel hit him liked,
 þe sauer of þe swete sesoun & song of þe briddes,
 þat he ferde fast a-boute floures to gadere,
 & layked him long while to lesten þat merpe.

(11.20-31.)

But in both instances the French text supplies the initiative for the redactor's additions, and in the latter scene they reflect an interest in the human situation rather than in the natural setting for its own sake. Elsewhere in the redaction there is nothing to differentiate his treatment of Nature from the brief, conventional references of the French poet.¹ And, indeed, this is true of his handling of the descriptive element

1) See, for example:- F: 1370-2 / E: 805; F: 1380- / E: 817-18;
 F: 1384-6 / E: 753-7; F: 1721 / E: 1022.

as a whole: despite variations which might suggest a greater interest in one aspect of the setting than in others, his general reaction is either to reproduce the French text uncritically or, more frequently, to abbreviate it by omitting as much of the ~~descriptive~~ detail as possible. The few exceptions are noteworthy only because they contradict the usual conformity of the redaction. But none of them are sufficiently sustained to indicate that the alliterative poet felt himself competent to describe any feature of the setting independently and creatively. Where he has displayed a certain independence,—as in his free abbreviation of the ~~ballad~~—his approach has been a purely negative one, contributing nothing personal or ~~distinctive~~ to the English version.

He has scarcely shown more individuality in his attitude to the ~~characters~~ who figure in the romance. Kalusa, in his study of the process of redaction, found evidence to suggest that the English author took considerable liberties with his original in the matter of ~~characterisation~~ "or hielt sich auch hier für befugt, nach eigenem Ermessen zu ändern, einzelne stübe, die ihm unverständlich erschienen, hinzuzufügen, andere, die er für unpassend hielt, wegzulassen u.s.w." (1) It must be admitted, however, that much of the evidence cited is fragmentary in nature and of limited significance. Grouped together in Kalusa's minute analysis it may appear impressive, but scattered here and there throughout the 5,500 lines of the alliterative poem, the various additions and alterations introduced by the redactor do very little to differentiate it from the French original. There are no major omissions, no large-scale importations of new material, and, consequently, no radical changes in the presentation of the characters.

1) Loc.cit., p.263.

But in this, as in other aspects of the redaction, the degree of verbal independence forced upon the alliterative poet by the inability of his medium to reproduce the French text word for word, has led him to introduce a number of minor additions to and deviations from the original. The influence of the alliterative medium is most apparent at a rudimentary level, where the narrative requires the mention of a character by name and the redactor, to complete the alliteration of the line, adds a tag of a personal nature: "William, Pat worþi child" (1.696); "William, hire worþi nory" (1.1511); "Melior, Pat menskful may" (1.659); "Hi menskful ladi Melior" (1.694).¹⁾ But a practice so mechanical as this, which inevitably labels William as "worþi" and Melior as "menskful", can scarcely be regarded as evidence of characterisation. And many of the passages, - two or three lines at most -, which Kaluzs listed as evidence of the redactor's wish to present his characters more vividly than the original author has done, are merely extensions of this principle. The French poet, in describing how William grew from infancy to boyhood in the forest, thought it necessary to stress his heroic qualities, handsome appearance, strength and skill with the bow (P: 359-35 / B: 170-97), and the redactor followed him in this method of introducing the hero, without significant variation. But in translating a subsequent passage with the same function, in which the Emperor is struck by William's bearing, he has slightly extended the original version:-

L'enfant regarde, pignette But Panna bi-held he a-boute a Pat burnet-eye,
 A grant maravilla se seigna Eov fair, how fetys it was, & freliche schapen;
 De sa biuuté, de sa enblance, So fair a silt of sog he sawe he never sawe,
 Et de sa noble contenance. Of here no of lykness lik him was none,
 Marvells siguill puet extra, He of so sad a semblant Pat marheuy wif eger.
 De de galat ne de quidera Rumpour wond witerly for wonder of Pat child,
 Guide chose face soit, Pat feilþely it were of fetys for Edward Pat child
 For ceque seulfles le wif. & for Pe surtege contenance Pat it knide Pare.
 (11.427-34.) (11.224-31.)

1) For further examples see: 11.808; 844; 1091; 1136; 1179; 1636; 5171.

The fullness of the English version gives greater weight to this description of the hero, but it represents a verbal elaboration rather than an imaginative extension of the French, and nothing has been added which deepens our appreciation of the character. And this is true of such passages throughout the redaction: the Alliterative poet has given added emphasis to certain traits of character, but he has not introduced anything novel or anything which conflicts with the original characterisation.

But though one may suspect that many of the opportunities to add such details were thrust upon the redactor by the nature of his medium rather than sought by him, yet through them he has, consciously or unconsciously, stressed those aspects of personality which seemed to him most important. The characterisation in Guillaume de Palerne is neither very profound nor very subtle. We have already seen how the French author used the battle-sequences to display the hero's courage and skill in arms, and how the redactor heightened the original effect by selective abbreviation, concentrating on those incidents in which William appears to most advantage. This effect reaches its culmination in the scenes where William delivers the defeated Duke of Saxony to the Emperor (F: 2353-62 / E: 1259-71) and, later, the Prince of Spain to the Queen of Sicily (F: 6287-8 / E: 3660-6), both of which have been slightly expanded by the redactor. But even the French romance, with its lengthy battle-sequences, pays little attention to the hero's knightly character by comparison with other aspects of his personality. Both versions stress his compassionate nature and his readiness to help others, but the English poem is somewhat more emphatic in statement.⁽¹⁾ These qualities express themselves particularly in his concern for Melior during their

1) When the Queen of Sicily appeals to William for help he gives his promise unhesitatingly and in a more forthright manner in the English than in the French text (F: 5281-302 / E: 2442-71).

flight: when they are surrounded in the quarry he blames himself for the danger into which he has brought her, and urges her to save herself by revealing her identity (F: 4058-67 / E: 2385-47). While earlier, during a discussion on how they are to live in the forest, the redactor has added a few lines in which William regrets that a delicately-bred princess should be forced to eat hips and haws, acorns and hazel-nuts (F: 1200-35 / E: 1800-31).

By comparison with William the other characters, even Melior herself, have received scant attention from either author, and there is little to distinguish them from the conventional figures of romance. Apart from her self-revelation in the love-scenes, Melior is characterised mainly by William's attitude towards her. Their relationship throughout the greater part of the romance is pleasantly natural and unsophisticated, and the colloquial tone of the alliterative version is well suited to scenes such as that in which they laugh together over their bog-ding-dong-

Quant de la pel fu reveste
Et bien fu ensalade et mie,
S'a apelé sadouce amie;
"Bele, fait il, he oelés mie;
Dites de mo que vos ensemble?"
"Cortez, sire, l'ocore me trefle,
Quant vos engartés enblez flés"

(11.3893-9.)

& when he was sowed as he schold bene,
William ful merili to Meliors Pan he saide,
"Sei me, loundilamman, how likes þe me now þe?"
"Bi Marie, sire, seide Meliors, "þe milde quen
of heuene,
So brene a here þe be-some, a burn on to loken,
Pat icham a-rise, bi God Pat me made,

To so so hideous a silt of youre semli face!"

(11.1738-44.)

Later, when she becomes Empress, Melior is more conventionally presented, as the great lady loved by rich and poor alike for her goodness.⁽¹⁾

Alixandrine is presented in a similar fashion. Up to the point of the lovers' flight she is a lively and interesting character, and the English author, having established her more fully than the French poet (F: 980-4 / E: 580-90), adds a touch of wit and hints at magic powers

1) The English version is even more conventional than the French here (F: 5485-90), and where the latter allows Melior to comfort herself on hearing of her father's death by the thought that now William will be Emperor in his stead, the English redactor adds this by the pious reflection that death is the lot of all men (F: 5272-6 / E: 5267-71).

which are not mentioned in the extant version of the original. But when she reappears towards the end of the romance it is merely as a stock figure, required to complete the triple marriage which rounds off the plot. The English author treats her even more summarily than the French, omitting William's enthusiastic welcome to her (F: 5599-617), and abbreviating her re-union with Melior (F: 5653-69 / E: 4909-14). None of the other human actors occupy the scene long enough to command even this degree of personification, and even the werwolf, though he figures prominently, is characterised by his good-hearted efforts to help the lovers rather than by anything which either poet has to say of him. ⁽¹⁾

In a redaction less closely bound to its original than William of Palerne these minor changes in characterisation would not be worthy of comment. But though, under the circumstances, they suggest a certain interest on the redactor's part, the alterations are inconsistent and do not reflect any general conception of the characters which is at variance with the original interpretation. At one point the redaction appears to stress natural behaviour, compassion and good-humour, while elsewhere it becomes even more conventional than the French version. The details involved are, in any case, so slight that in the context of the whole they do little or nothing to differentiate the two versions or distinguish the personalities of the two authors.

In one other incidental aspect, however, the contrast between original and redaction is sufficiently clear-cut to suggest such a distinction. The French author occasionally interrupts the narrative

1) Kaluza (loc.cit., p. 269) thought that the role played by the werwolf and the degree to which he is guided by human reason had been made more positive by the redactor, but this impression probably owes more to the ease with which, in the lines he cites (ll. 1340; 1384; 2453-5; etc.), "wist", "war" and "witty" alliterate with "werwolf", than to any special significance intended by the redactor.

to comment on the situation in which the characters find themselves, in the light of circumstances known to the reader but not to them.

For example, when William learns from the Queen of Sicily of her plight-

Molt par li grieve de son raine
Et de li a'en a tort domine;
Mais n'il seust qu'el fust sa mere,
Molt li fust plus sa perte amere.
N'en sevant rien, ele ne il,
Que il ait mere n'ele fil; (11,5283-8.)⁴

The English author has reproduced these comments on two occasions only (F: 3926-7 / E: 2290-1 & F: 4530-5 / E: 2705-6), suggesting that though they formed part of his original he chose to ignore them elsewhere.⁵ He has also omitted a number of lengthy passages in which the characters reflect upon their condition and the workings of Fate.⁶ These asides delay the narrative and, in some instances, weaken its effect by forestalling future action, and the redactor's general rejection of them is further evidence of his preoccupation with narration to the neglect of other elements.

The technical conduct of the redaction also reflects this preoccupation.⁶ The English poet has been at some pains to make his method of story-telling as competent and effective as the original and to improve upon it in some respects. He accepted the original construction and conduct of the narrative in all major particulars and

1) See also: F: 537-8; 1117; 2114; 2116; 2198-2200; 2704-5; 3331-3; 3460-4; 3528-30; 3756-66; 3915-20; 3984-7; 5418-20; 5560-2; 6454-7.

2) See Kalusa, *loc.cit.*, pp.246-7.

3) These include: F: 899-907; 1531-62; 1589-1626; 4031-47.

4) As Kalusa examined the technical conduct of the redaction with particular thoroughness I have attempted only a general summary here.

confined his manipulation of it to matters of detail, making, however, so many minor adjustments as to suggest a deliberate policy on his part. His conception involved greater attention to narrative continuity than the author of the French version had thought necessary: where the latter turns abruptly to a new situation the alliterative poet has frequently tried to show, in a line or two, the connection between this and the previous incident.⁽¹⁾ Similarly, when a new character appears the redactor indicates immediately his connection with the action in hand, whereas the original author allows this to become apparent as the story develops.⁽²⁾ Such additions indicate a more punctilious, yet, at the same time, less mature technique of narration. Where the French author proceeds in full confidence that the reader will have no difficulty in following the development of his story, the redactor, uncertain of his effects, pauses to forge additional narrative links and to stress the relationship of characters to the action. The former allows the grammatical relationship between neighbouring sentences to indicate the connection between events, whereas the latter interrupts the narrative sequence to make an explicit statement relating the incidents in time.⁽³⁾

Hit tidde after on a time, as tellus ours bokes, (1.198.)

In the same punctilious spirit the redactor opens or closes a detailed account with a line or two indicating the general effect of the passage, and summarises the content of a speech in the same way.⁽⁴⁾ To prepare the reader for developments within a sequence he prefaces it with a summary of relevant information.⁽⁵⁾ And where the French text alludes to previous

1) For examples see Malone, loc. cit., pp. 214-15. 2) Ibid., p. 215.

3) Ibid., p. 215. 4) Ibid., pp. 212-13. 5) Ibid., pp. 216-17.

incidents, the English reminds the reader of them by inserting a resumé,⁽¹⁾ -but the redactor apparently realised that this could be tedious if carried too far, and where the original recapitulates past action at length he has given a brief paraphrase rather than a translation.⁽²⁾

In culmination these relatively minor features suggest that the English poet either distrusted the technical competence of the original or doubted his own ability to reproduce it effectively. All his measures are intended to make the story clear, explicit and easy to follow without altering the narrative structure fundamentally, but they have resulted in much needless repetition, clumsy transitions, over-emphasis and unnecessary obtrusion of the narrator upon the scene. The French version is not free from these faults: a skilled redactor making an independent approach and rehandling the story according to his own conception of it might have removed them, but they have merely been magnified by the alliterative poet's subservience to his source, his timidity in redaction, and fussy concern to emphasise what was already abundantly clear.

In many ways the technical aspect of William of Palerne is characteristic of the redaction as a whole. Broadly speaking the whole content of Guillaume de Palerne has been treated with the same timid conservatism which marks the conduct of the narrative in the English version. The alliterative poet has accepted the French romance very much as he found it, and has reproduced it without excessive expansion or abbreviation, without structural alteration, and without significant change in characterization. In effect the English work remains, both in

1) See Kalusa, loc.cit., pp.218-20.

2) Ibid., pp.220-2.

general plan and in the great majority of its details, very much what its original must have been, if we are to judge from the surviving texts of Gaillarde de Palerne. The obvious implication is, at first sight, somewhat surprising: that no fundamental alteration was required in adapting a romance, produced over a century and a half earlier to the prescription of a French aristocrat, for the entertainment of a Fourteenth century English audience, linguistically debarred from contact with contemporary Anglo-French culture. The explanation of this apparent community of tastes in two types of reader so different in social status, education and intellectual interests may lie partly in the composition of the English audience, partly in the nature of the French romance.

By the mid-Fourteenth century it is no longer appropriate to conceive the English audience in terms of social conditions during the earlier post-Conquest period, when it consisted of the aristocratic minority whose education and literary interests were exclusively French, and the vast, unlettered majority who found their entertainment, largely at a sub-literary level, in the resources of native folk-lore. As the decay of Anglo-Norman increasingly confined the use of French to courtly circles the potential audience for literature in the native language must have included a growing number of those whose social standing and literacy gave them a degree of refinement and intellectual interest,--the members of the emergent Middle Class. Many of them may have been attracted by what they knew at second hand of the roman courtois, but they would be debarred from full appreciation by the fact that it celebrated social conventions which were not part of their own experience. This difficulty did not exist in the narrative literature most readily available to them in English,--the so-called 'English' romances of Horn and

Havelok, Athelston and Casselyn, Guy of Warwick and Beues of Pantoun.

These tales have many features in common: they are centered upon a hero, often of noble birth, who makes his way in the world, winning lands and honours, or regaining his ancestral heritage, by virtue of his personal ability, quickness of wit and physical strength. They involve supernatural elements, magic rings and prophetic dreams, but they move, for the most part, in the natural world of everyday experience and often at a humble social level. They are 'popular' in that they make their appeal by the narration of adventures for their inherent interest, not for their sentimental significance or in celebration of an ethical code, either heroic or romantic. And there are indications that they were appreciated by a popular English audience when the romans courtois were still confined to those who could read them in the original.

William of Palerne has commonly been classified amongst these 'English' romances.⁽¹⁾ So far as the origins of its story-matter are concerned the classification is misleading, but its association with the popular tales which reflect the tastes of the English lower classes is a valid indication of its basic appeal. The title of roman d'aventures applied to Guillaume de Palerne distinguishes it from the roman courtois by emphasising the element of adventurous incident which constitutes its chief attraction. The career of William, the 'male Cinderella', who, by innate ability, wins his way from the humblest rank to the throne which is his birthright, gains a well-born bride and with her an empire, aided, to a certain extent, by supernatural agencies, has obvious affinities with those of Horn, Havelok, and the other 'popular' heroes.

1) By Wells (Manual, pp. 7-27) and by Renwick and Orton (pp. 351-2) amongst others.

Although we have no record of the story in its pre-literary form, its folk-lore elements are as apparent as those which underlie the Matter of England. And though we cannot tell whether it was these fundamental features or the Sicilian setting and personal associations of the story-matter which attracted the attention of the Countess Yolande, the author of Guillaume de Palerne clearly recognised that its appeal lay in the adventures which form its core. He treated them fully and with evident enthusiasm, without attempting to disguise their popular associations by glossing over the scenes of William's humble childhood, or to make them more sophisticated by rationalising the werwolf's role and omitting the beast-disguises, or to avoid the characteristic duplications of the folk-tale.

Whether or not this aspect of the romance was entirely to the taste of the Countess Yolande and her courtly circle, it met with the complete approval of the English redactor. His treatment of the French text makes it obvious that he accepted it at the author's evaluation, that he regarded the adventurous incidents as its chief interest, and was not deterred by its repetitive nature from reproducing it at full length. It is not remarkable, in view of the contemporary attitude to literary form, that he did not attempt to alter the episodic structure of the original, but it is significant that, as a translator working in a demanding medium, he did not shorten his task by omitting some of the duplicated incidents in the main plot. He clearly expected that the composition which met with the approval of the Earl of Hereford would also be approved in its entirety by his humbler countrymen. Such wholesale acceptance of French matter is, however, a rather negative indication of English tastes and interests. Traces of a more positive and personal attitude on the part of the redactor are extremely limited: a preference

for incidents which have a high degree of human interest, and a somewhat half interest in reactions to the animal disguises, expressed by slight verbal expansion of the original and by one, admittedly doubtful, addition to it. But, just as nothing of importance has been omitted, nothing has been added which suggests a creative urge or a desire for originality on the redactor's part. When all allowances have been made for his contribution, William of Palerne remains substantially what Guillaume de Palerne originally was: a narrative of adventures linked by the familiar motif of a popular hero's rise to power.

But Guillaume de Palerne contains two additional elements which, in the form they have here, would not have figured in the unsophisticated tales of the Matter of England. The roman d'aventures did not exclude the contemporary codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love to which the roman courtois was wholly consecrated, and here the one is represented by the hero's knightly feats against the Duke of Saxony and the King of Spain, the other by his wooing of Melior. The latter, at least, would be approved by the Countess Yolande as an element familiar to her in the more conventional romances of the period. But the love of William and Melior is not merely a romantic interlude superimposed upon an adventure story to suit the taste of the French redactor's patroness. It is a basic element in the narrative, the primary cause of all its adventures, so integrated that it must surely have been part of the story in its folk-lore form. The English folk-tales, too, did not exclude an element of this kind: the love of Rymenhild for Horn, which, like that of Melior, is a tribute offered to the hero by his social superior; of Guy and Felice, which is the cause of wanderings, adventures and heroic strivings; of Devis and Jonian, who, like the other lovers, have marriage as their sole aim. The love element in Guillaume de Palerne is essentially

of this kind, both in circumstance and in the emotional relationship involved, - frank, natural and with ~~legitimate~~ marriage as its goal. Only the ~~conventional~~ expression given to it is alien, and that bears all the signs of having been imported by a poet steeped in the literature of amour courtois. Its artificiality conflicts with the essentially natural relationship between hero and heroine and the realistic atmosphere of the romance as a whole, and the disparity is underlined by the complete disappearance of all conventionality, of timidity and love-sickness, of sighs and self-examinations, once the lovers embark on their adventures together.

The localised nature of the love-business would have made it easy for the English redactor to omit them, prefacing the lovers' flight by a direct statement of their feelings for each other and the barriers to their marriage. Alternatively, the unattractive sophistication imposed upon them by the French poet could have been expurgated by abandoning his conventional treatment in favour of one more in keeping with the genuine emotions involved. The alliterative poet chose to do neither, but to retain the incident essentially in its original form, with respect both to content and expression. Yet it is clear from his version that he was not entirely at ease with the conventions of amour courtois. He has made alterations aimed not only at the abbreviation of the love-monologues, but at injecting into them a practical logic which is foreign to their nature. His attempts are limited and have resulted in some confusion, but in a redaction otherwise so ~~conservative~~ they are not without significance. Combined with occasional omissions of conventional matter which give the lovers' actions an unmotivated directness more in keeping with the true nature of their relationship, the colloquial tone which his alliterative medium has superimposed upon the emotional

exaltation of the original, and the under-current of humorous irony which runs through his version, they have done something to modify this importation from the essentially foreign world of the roman courtois. His measures are timid and partial, but their tendency towards the single, natural treatment of love in the tradition of the folk-tale is perceptible.

Something of the same tendency is apparent in the redactor's attitude to chivalrous exploits, but here it has found expression in more sweeping alterations to the French romance. No romance writer of the Middle Ages could dispense with the element of personal heroism, displayed in action and in conformity with the codes of the society for which he wrote. But it took widely different forms according to the differing conventions of the age: in the roman courtois the knight displays his skill in the use of knightly weapons, on the battle-field or in the lists, adhering strictly to the code of Chivalry and fighting for his lady or his greater glory in her eyes; in the popular tale the hero fights with fist or club, against all odds and under no code of fair play, for survival and his own greater renown. Personal heroism in Guillaume de Palerne takes neither of these two extreme forms of expression. The hero engages in two lengthy campaigns, fighting as a knight, and in implied obedience to the code of Chivalry. But he fights for honour not for love, first in justification of his knighthood and then in aid of his mother and for the recovery of his patrimony. And the French version is primarily concerned with the realistic portrayal of the action and the practical success of the hero. Though it pays occasional tribute to the conventions of Chivalry in descriptions of ceremonial arming, and accounts of battle-field orations, here, as in the body of the romance, the narration of incident for its own sake predominates.

The English redactor, however, has not accepted even this degree of compromise with the conventions of Chivalry. Despite the lively action and variety of incidents which the battle-scenes contain they have not held his attention to the same extent as the non-military adventures in his source. And in abbreviating them he has discriminated particularly against the conventional incidentals to warfare, the speeches and ceremonials,--even where they immediately concern the hero himself. So far as his loyalty to the original permitted he has concentrated upon those incidents which show William in action, emphasising their contribution to the success of his career rather than his personal prowess or skill in arms. The redaction as a whole evinces none of that preoccupation with the technical details of warfare, with the practice of knighthood, which marks the roman courtois, written for those whose profession it was. The detailed descriptions of combat, by which the author of Guillaume de Palerne catered for such an interest amongst his readers, have been ignored or paraphrased with evident lack of enthusiasm. The English poet has not attempted to popularise the battle-sequences, by displaying his hero's ability in unorthodox combat involving brute strength rather than skill, but by the negative nature of his redaction he has largely neutralised the chivalric element which, to a limited extent, characterised these scenes in the original.

If the redactor's treatment of chivalrous exploits, more individual than anything else in his version, can be described as negative, the term might equally well be applied to the redaction as a whole. The modifications made to the original are so limited in extent and so indeterminate in nature, that its appreciation in a largely unaltered form by an audience very different from that for which it was composed can

only to be understood by considering the extent to which Gaillaume de Palerne represented a compromise between two literary extremes and the community of interests which existed between different social classes. The roman d'aventures combined a lively narrative of the type of incident whose appeal is universal and perennial with a limited recognition of contemporary social codes. But in this particular example, though the author used certain episodes in his adventure story to celebrate the ethics of the society to which his patroness belonged, the two elements have not been fused. The exposition of Chivalry and Courtly Love is partial and mechanical, and adventure remains the keynote of the romance. To the redactor working for a popular English audience one element at least would present no difficulties: his readers would readily accept an adventure narrative of the kind with which they were already familiar in native literature and folk-lore. That he also expected them to accept a modified version of those incidents designed to cater for the social interests of the Countess Yolande and her circle, probably indicates that the English audience was no longer confined to the popular circles for whose entertainment the Matter of England was exploited, but included many members of the new Middle Class. Their social aspirations and interest in the manners and ethical codes of their superiors may explain his retention of matter which might easily have been omitted in the process of redaction. Whether or not his estimate of the widening tastes of the English audience was immediately justified it is impossible to tell, but the existence of an early Sixteenth century printed text of a prose recension of William of Palerne suggests that its admixture of vigorous adventure and formalised sentiment was well calculated to appeal to the new literary patrons in the age of the commercial press

and the common reader.⁽¹⁾

But when all differences have been made for the undecided tastes of the developing English audience and the indeterminate nature of the original composition, William of Palerne must be judged an essentially negative example of the redactive process. Though the limited modifications made to the scenes of love and war suggest dissatisfaction with their treatment in the French romance, it has not found expression in any clear-cut form. The alterations made have affected the degree of emphasis placed upon Chivalry and Courtly Love, but there has been no attempt to displace them or to substitute a more natural ethic. Where the redactor has supplemented the original material, by extending some incidents of adventure, his version shows little originality or invention, and only limited ability in the creation of imaginative detail. His failure to visualize scenes and characters clearly is marked by an indeterminate wavering between expansion and abbreviation, which now seems intended to create an effect not designed by the French author, now falls back into conformity with his intentions. Momentary attempts to write creatively, as in the description of natural settings, are counterbalanced by a general reluctance to fill in the necessary background to the action, even where the material is supplied by the

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- 1) This Sixteenth century prose version is represented by four consecutive printed pages, discovered in Sutherland in 1892, and first reported by E.W.B. Nicholson ("An Unknown English Prose Version of William of Palerne", Academy, No. 1068, London, 1893, p. 223), who suggested that it came from the press of Wynkyn de Worde at some time between 1520 and 1535. Having compared the text with the corresponding portion of the other versions of the romance, he concluded that the printed edition derived, not from the French, but either from the alliterative poem or from an English prose redaction of it. F. Brie, who edited the two leaves ("Zwei frühneuenglische Prosaversionen", Archiv, 118, Braunschweig, 1907, pp. 318-28), came to the same conclusion. The enduring popular appeal of the story is demonstrated by the

French text. The redaction as a whole is characterised by timid adherence to the original and a noted reluctance to attempt independent description or narration on a significant scale. Even the minor changes which have been made in the technical conduct of the narrative reflect the redactor's lack of self-assurance: patently anxious to improve upon the original presentation of the story-matter he lacked the confidence to do more than tinker ineffectually with his source.

Since so much in William of Palerne has been contributed by the French author and so little by the redactor, the English composition can scarcely be judged as such. Critics have found fault with "the essential incongruity in a story which attempts to combine a courtly love intrigue with a typical roman d'aventure"⁽¹⁾, but the English author is to blame only in that, though troubled by the incongruity, he lacked the initiative to deal with it fundamentally. Others have objected that the improbability of the animal disguises, which does more violence to the imagination than the supernatural elements in the plot, destroys its effectiveness as a whole.⁽²⁾ It is an objection which probably would not have occurred to the medieval reader, and the redactor does not seem to have been aware of any defect: the fullness with which he has treated all incidents concerning the disguises suggests approval of the device and a genuine interest in human reactions to them. It has been thought possible "that a keen sense of the ridiculous on his part, turned to irony, is responsible for the acceptance of the disguise there, which looks to us like his most serious error of taste and judgement"⁽³⁾. But it

(Cont.) existence in a Seventeenth century manuscript of an Irish version, which, according to its editor (G.O'Sullivan, ed. Sachsra Uilliam, Dublin, 1949, p.xvii), was derived from an English prose text of the type and, most probably, of the period of the early print.

1) L.A. Hibbard, op.cit., p.216. 2) See O.Kane, Middle English Literature London, 1971 p.51.

3) O.Kane, op.cit., p.52.

may be doubted that a redactor who considered the central motif in his source ridiculous would give such a full and faithful account of it, or, if he intended to parody it, that he should not make his ironic intention more apparent.

Nevertheless, the suggestion underlines something of major importance in the English poem: the pervasive undertone of humour, which attracts everyone who reads it as the most characteristic and most unusual feature of the romance.⁽¹⁾ It is an element impossible to isolate or define precisely since it is not expressed in sustained passages written with deliberate humorous effect or intended to ridicule situations which the original author treated seriously. It consists, rather, of a multitude of slight touches, a verse here, a few lines there, which suggest a consistent attitude of mind: the sly humour with which Alisaundrine views the effects of love upon William and Melior;⁽²⁾ the Emperor's amusement at the naivety of the young cowherd;⁽³⁾ the narrator's humorous exaggeration of the terror inspired by the appearance of the werwolf and the other beasts.⁽⁴⁾ The consistency with which the element appears shows that it is not a measure of characterization, but rather an expression of the redactor's own personality, which, in an unobtrusive way, diffuses itself through the alliterative poem.⁽⁵⁾ It is his most important contribution, giving the redaction a character of its own quite distinct from the French version, glossing over the improbable incidents

1) See K.W. Tibbels, *loc. cit.*, p. 355; G. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

2) See, for example: ll. 834-43; 1015-21; 1028-34; 1727-33.

3) See, for example: ll. 345-6; 368-70.

4) See, for example: ll. 1775-84; 1850-9; 1886-96.

5) "William, the English imitator, impresses one as a modest, naively good humoured, and by no means untalented personage? "We are especially attracted in William of Palerne by the author's mind, which is

of the plot with a good-humoured acceptance, which carries more conviction than the most soberly factual narrative, and endowing the whole with unusual human appeal.⁽²⁾

Whether this element was wholly an unconscious reflection of the redactor's light-hearted attitude to his function, or was due, in part, to his conscious attempt to create an atmosphere appropriate to the romance, it is impossible to determine. It has been suggested that much of the humour is an unintentional by-product of the essential incongruity between the alliterative line and the subjects to which it is applied here.⁽³⁾ But though the suggestion might reasonably be accepted where the love-scenes are concerned, the English verse is quite competent to carry the adventurous incident which makes up the bulk of the romance. On the whole it has been competently handled,⁽³⁾ though it is true that in the battle-sequences its peculiar merits have not been exploited to the full. Yet undoubtedly the whole nature of the redaction has been

(Cont.) reflected in the whole work, and is plainly shown in single passages? (B. ten Brink, History of English Literature (Trans. H. V. Kennedy), Vol. I, London, 1893, p. 335.)

- 1) "...William of Palerne relies for its effect less upon the story than upon the appeal of the breadth of humanity that it generally displays. For this reason it seems to have more sensibility, substance and dignity than the general run of the romances. Its characters expand under a painstakingly sensitive treatment that seems to spring from a happy and unembittered understanding of human nature? (G. Kane, op. cit., p. 51.)
- 2) "He does his best, too, to convey the sentiment, but he is defeated by the essential unsuitability of his medium. Passages meant to be moving..... are made ludicrous by the heavy insistence of the alliterative lines? (D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, (ed. F. Kean), Oxford, 1955, p. 54.) See also W. F. Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p. 73.
- 3) "...he uses a good, plain style of the alliterative long line with a freedom and skill that increase as he goes on? (G. Kane, op. cit., p. 51.) "He shows great skill in managing the alliterative verse.... and his apology to the reader for the choice of this metre is quite unnecessary? (B. ten Brink, op. cit., p. 335.)

affected by the use of the alliterative medium. The difficulty of reproducing the content of the octosyllabic couplet with precision has forced upon the redactor a degree of independence, in matters of expression and in minor details of narration, which he was unwilling to practise in his general conduct of the redaction. In so far as his medium permits he is a patient and faithful transmitter, but the inflexibility of the alliterative line constantly forces him to forsake the guidance of the French text and write creatively, drawing on his own imagination to fill out the matter in hand. Through such momentary self-expression, in single lines and half-lines scattered throughout the whole, his personality has left its imprint on William of Palerne.

The process is cumulative and the total effect more apparent than the study of individual instances would suggest. The personality projected by the English narrator is peculiarly suited to the character of the romance. The fantastic nature of the plot, the frank realism with which it is presented, and the unsophisticated simplicity of the characters, harmonise effectively with his unquestioning acceptance of improbabilities, his naïf interest in overworked narrative devices, and sympathetic identification with the human situations involved. And, despite the artificiality of certain episodes, the colloquial tone conveyed by the alliterative medium is perfectly in keeping with the fundamental nature of the folk-tale. The total effect is much more than a matter of style, much less than a reinvestigation. The timidity and fundamental lack of originality in the general conduct of the redaction suggest that the English author had no conception of recreating his source in personal terms. But merely by his choice of an alliterative medium,—a choice which in itself reflects a certain independence

from the literary tradition represented by his source-, he made possible the production of a work which indicated something of the developing tastes of the contemporary English audience and is marked by the personality of an individual author. The artistic success of William of Palerne is limited and it cannot be called a native creation, but in an age when English literature lacked originality and an individual character it represents a certain advance.

CHAPTER III

CHEVALERE ASSIGNE

The romance of Chevalere Assigne cannot be precisely dated,⁽¹⁾ but has generally been assigned to the end of the Fourteenth century. The mixture of linguistic forms in the text makes the area of composition more difficult to determine: it has, however, been identified as an East Midland copy of a North West Midland original.⁽²⁾ The single surviving manuscript, British Museum Cotton Caligula A.ii, has been three times⁽³⁾ edited, but none of the editions includes a full critical apparatus and only limited attention has so far been paid to the poem.

There is little doubt, however, as to the origin of the story-matter. The poet makes the common allusion to a literary source,—"as þe booke tellethe"⁽⁴⁾—, which in this case appears to be more than a mere convention. Utterson, the first editor, identified this source as a

1) See Wells, Manual, p. 96.

2) See Oakden, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. I, p. 63.

3) E. V. Utterson, Roxburghe Club, London, 1820; H. H. Gibbs, The Romance of the Chevalere Assigne, E. M. T. S., E. S. 6, London, 1868; W. H. French and C. H. Hale in Middle English Metrical Romances, New York, 1930, pp. 859-73.

4) Line references throughout are to the edition by Gibbs. See here l. 7 and again l. 270.

(1)
French romance contained in Royal MS.15 E.vi of the British Museum.

Gibbs was more precise in describing the alliterative work as "an
(2)
epitome of the first 1083 lines of the French poem" in the Royal MS.

French and Hale, in their very brief Introduction, merely repeated this
(3)
ascription, which has come to be generally accepted.

The section of Royal 15 E.vi referred to, -ff.272-272-,
consists of a French chanson de geste, in about 5800 alexandrines, called
(4)
Le Chevalier au Cygne. This title properly belongs to the opening
section only of a cycle of poems, three of which are found together in
the British Museum Manuscript. The cycle owes its origin to the enthusiasm
aroused by the First Crusade and the desire to give its events widespread
(5)
circulation in literary form. The order in which its various component
parts were written can only be determined approximately, but the earliest

1) See the Introduction to his edition, the pages of which are unnumbered. W.J.Thoms makes a similar tentative identification in his Introduction to "The History of Helyas, Knight of the Swan" in A Collection of Early Prose Romances, London, 1828, Vol. III, p.iii.

2) Op.cit., p.i.

3) Op.cit., p.359. See also: Wells Manual, p.96; A.H.Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances (Yale Studies in English, IX), New York, 1901, p.228.

There is some discrepancy between the different accounts: French and Hale say that the English version corresponds to "about the first 1100 lines" of the French poem. It actually corresponds to the first 1065 lines of the French. Gibbs' figure of 1083 lines is probably due to inaccuracy in counting the closely written lines of the manuscript, and that given by French and Hale may represent an approximation based upon this.

4) See E.L.D.Ward, Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, Vol.I, London, 1883, pp.708-10.

5) The genesis and nature of the literature inspired by the crusades are described by E.Boy, "Les Poèmes français relatifs à la première croisade", Rom., LV, Paris, 1929, pp.411-68, and, more fully, by A.Hatem, Les Poèmes épiques des croisades, Paris, 1932.

branches seem to be those most closely concerned with historical events, the Chanson d'Antioche and the Chanson de Jérusalem.⁽¹⁾ It is generally accepted that these were written by an Artois poet, Richard le Beler, early in the Twelfth century. The originals have, in any case, been lost, and the two poems survive only in a redaction made by Graindor de Douai⁽²⁾ between 1180 and 1200. As well as recasting Richard's work, Graindor inserted between the two existing sections a new episode of the Chétifs, "sans fondement historique,.....consacré aux aventures fabuleuses de quelques barons français capturés par les Turcs, au cours de la malheureuse expédition de Pierre l'Éremitte".⁽³⁾

This trilogy, of over 23,000 lines in monorhymed alexandrine laisses, was evidently conceived as a finished whole, but the process begun by the interpolation of the fictitious and fantastic Chétifs in the factual narrative of the Crusades was inevitably continued: "certains de leurs épisodes, saisis par l'imagination populaire ou romanesque, subissent la contamination d'éléments folkloriques ou merveilleux".⁽⁴⁾

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- 1) "Der älteste Kern des Zyklus haben wir in der Chanson d'Antioche zu sehen, der bald die Chanson de Jérusalem und unser Gedicht /i.e., the Chevalier au Cygne-Enfances Godefroy/ folgten, während die Chétifs und die Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, die von vielen Wandern berichten, erst Ende des XII. und am Anfang des XIII. Jahrhunderts entstanden sein dürften" (K. Binstein, "Beiträge zur Überlieferung des Chevalier au Cygne und der Enfances Godefroi", Romanische Forschungen, LXXIX, Erlangen, 1911, p. 722). Most scholars, however, place the composition of the Chétifs before that of the Chevalier au Cygne-Enfances Godefroy.
 - 2) See R. Jaffray, The Two Knights of the Swan: Lohengrin and Helyas, London, 1910, p. 36.
 - 3) R. Bompert, Le Moyen Âge, (Histoire de la littérature française, ed. L. Halévy) Vol. I (Paris, 1931, pp. 37-8).
 - 4) F. Zentgraf, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1954, p. 121.

In keeping with the common practice of the period, attention is concentrated upon a central figure amongst the leaders of the crusade, and his career becomes the thread on which are hung countless incidents with little or no relation to the original subject of the chanson de geste: "dès l'origine le véritable héros de la croisade s'est dégagé. C'est le duc de Basse-Lorraine, Godefroy de Bouillon. Autour de ce personnage historique se développe, dès le début du XIII^e siècle, un réseau de légendes qui fournissent la matière des Infances Godefroy, et surtout du Chevalier au Cygne, suivi plus tard de la Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne".⁽¹⁾

Our knowledge of this process of development is imperfect, and there is disagreement as to the order in which the various sections were composed, and whether the Chevalier au Cygne should be regarded as an independent poem or merely as an introduction to the Infances Godefroy. There is

little doubt, however, that this elaboration of the Crusade Cycle belongs to the early Thirteenth century, and that it was compiled by a jongleur named Renaut or Renaud.⁽²⁾ The existence of a considerable number of manuscripts suggests that the cycle in its extended form was extremely popular, while the variant texts which survive show that it was several times reworked and elaborated to enormous lengths,—over 55,000 lines in some versions. Ultimately, towards the end of the Thirteenth century, it reached the final stage of Medieval literary development in a prose romance containing all the original matter, historical and fabulous alike.⁽³⁾

1) R. Bossuat, op.cit., p.68.

2) See W.F. Holmes, A History of Old French Literature, revised ed., New York, 1948, p.125. As one manuscript containing the complete cycle (Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal 3139) is specifically dated 1268, the various branches must have been unified by this period.

3) See P. Guethor, op.cit., p.299.

In this process of evolution the opening sections of the narrative were probably the last to be added to the cycle, at a period when the original literary inspiration of the chanson de geste had already been greatly adulterated by the influence of romance. Concentration upon a single epic hero and celebration of his fame by adding an account of his early career to his crusade adventures, by recounting his noble birth and the great deeds of his ancestors, leads ultimately to the inclusion of their ancestry and early adventures, as much for their narrative interest as for the reflected glory which they throw upon the hero himself. As a result, the narrative sequence which ends in the historical present opens in the fabulous and undatable past, with a mass of incident quite unconnected with the crusades and the real Godfrey of Bouillon, fantastic in nature and romantic in tone. (1)

This is the stage represented by the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, the opening section of the Godfrey cycle, though probably the last to be attached to it, and the only one with which we need be concerned in seeking the source of Chevalere Assigne. (2)

The story of the strange birth and early adventures of the Swan-Knight, who, as the supposed ancestor of Godfrey of Bouillon, gives his name to the Chevalier au Cygne, is believed to have had an existence quite apart from the cycle, to be considerably older in origin and to embody mythological and legendary elements. (3) The germ of the narrative appears to have been a legend of the marriage of a mortal to a

1) "Ces compilations ne présentent aucune homogénéité. Elles portent la marque de plusieurs auteurs, la trace de plusieurs époques. La fantaisie la plus débridée s'y mêle à l'histoire la plus authentique" (A. Baton, op. cit., p. ix.)

2) See P. Paris, Histoire littéraire de la France, Vol. XIII, Paris, 1895, p. 383.

3) See A. L. Frey, The Swan-Knight Legend, Nashville, Tenn., 1931, p. 1.

swan-maiden, a mythical creature, half-human, half-bird, common to the folklore of the Greeks, the Celts and the primitive Germanic tribes. In Germanic legend the swan-maidens "have the power of transforming themselves into swans at will by donning wings, a tail, a necklace, or some garment made of swan's plumage"⁽¹⁾ In this instance the power of transformation is inherited by the seven children of the union, born miraculously at one birth, and wearing the silver necklaces which enable them to escape the death planned by a wicked grandfather.

The evolution of the Swan-Children legend in its folklore form can only be guessed at, but scholars are generally agreed in attributing it originally to the region of the lower Rhine.⁽²⁾ Its earliest recorded appearance in literary form is in the work of a Lotharingian monk, Jean de Haute-Seille, who included it in his Dolopethos,⁽³⁾ a collection of Latin prose tales made about 1190, and translated into French octosyllabic couplets by the poet Herbert, sometime in the first decade of the Thirteenth century.⁽⁴⁾ Although Jean de Haute-Seille claims an oral rather than a written source, the story of the Swan-Children as told by him is already somewhat remote from its folklore form and much

1) A.L.Fray, The Swan-Knight Legend, Nashville, Tenn., 1931, pp.5-6.

2) See W.J.Thoms, op.cit., Vol.III, p.11; G.Paris, Review of E.L.Todd's edition of La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, Rev., XIX, Paris, 1890, p.326; F.Blondiaux, "La Légende du Chevalier au Cygne", Revue de Belgique, 2^e série, XXXVIII, Brussels, 1903, p.167.

3) Ed., A.Hilke, Meidolberg, 1913.

4) See G.Paris, loc.cit., p.316.

5) Ed., C.Bruneau and A.de Montaiglon, Paris, 1856.

(1)
 of its mythical significance has been obscured. And already it has
 become associated with the story of the Swan-Knight, though his
 adventures are only referred to, not narrated, and there is no mention
 of his relationship to Godfrey of Bouillon. (2)

Yet we know that the association between the historical
 Godfrey and the legendary Swan-Knight already existed in the mid-
 Twelfth century, and the next appearance of the legend is as an integral
 part of the Crusade Cycle based on Godfrey's career. (3)
 Nous allons voir
 apparaître maintenant des textes plus explicites, des œuvres faisant
 déjà partie du grand cycle de la croisade, où la soudure est complètement
 faite entre les deux légendes. La forme la plus ancienne nous en est
 donnée dans le poème édité par L. Todd, et désigné par Gaston Paris

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- 1) G. Paris (loc. cit., p. 326) considered that "l'histoire du Chevalier au Cygne, telle qu'elle se lit dans le Dolopathos, avait été empruntée directement à un récit oral, à un conte" G. Rust (Sur quelques formes de la légende du Chevalier au Cygne, Rom., XXXIV, Paris, 1905, pp. 206-14) believed that the story had previously attained literary form. The essential point is, that in the Dolopathos, if not before, the process of medievalization was already begun, the legend being accepted for its narrative value, freely handled and combined with other, extraneous, material.
 - 2) "Aucun manuscrit français ne nous a transmis la légende du Chevalier au Cygne indépendante de celle des Enfants Cygnes. La soudure des deux contes est bien antérieure au XIII^e siècle? (F. Blondeaux, loc. cit., Vol. XXXVIII, p. 233). "Toutefois le conte qui fait l'objet de notre poème n'a en réalité rien à faire avec celui du Chevalier au Cygne; il a existé indépendamment avant d'être soudé à l'autre...." (G. Paris, loc. cit., p. 315.)
 - 3) Godfrey's descent from the swan-knight is expressly denied by William of Tyre in his Latin history of the Crusades (Bk. IX, Ch. VI), written between 1163 and 1183. See U. T. Holmes, op. cit., p. 125, and Baron de Reiffenberg, ed. Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godfroid de Bouillon, Vol. I, Brussels, 1846, pp. ii-iii.

(1) sous le nom d'Eliezer. The manuscript from which Todd's edition of the Naissance is taken (Bibliothèque Nationale 12556) contains all branches of the Cycle du Chevalier au Cygne including "une version anonyme des Enfants-Cygnés qui est certainement la plus ancienne et qui présente de nombreux traits communs avec le Conte du Dolopathos". Though the exact relationship of this version to the Dolopathos has not yet been determined, it is generally agreed that it represents the earliest known attempt to adapt the legend of the Swan-Children for a specific function in connection with the History of Godfrey of Bouillon. And here the process of medievalization has gone even further than in the Latin version and the mythological associations of the original story have been still further obscured. The mysterious nature of the swan-women has been completely forgotten, she is as human as her husband,--now a king, and the transformation of their seven children into swans on the removal of their necklaces is left without explanation, as one incident in a long chain of adventures. As part of this process of rationalization

1) F. Blondiaux, loc. cit., Vol. XXXVIII, p. 170.

2) H.A. Todd, ed., La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, in P.M.L.A., IV, Baltimore, 1889.

3) A. Haten, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

4) The date suggested for the version of B.N. 12556 by H.A. Smith ("Studies in the Epic Poem Godfrey de Bouillon", P.M.L.A., XXVII, Cambridge, Mass., 1912, p. 149), 1160-70, would make it even earlier than the Dolopathos, and E. Figeonneau (Le Cycle de la croisade et de la famille de Bouillon, Saint Cloud, 1877, p. 191 and p. 241) thought that Jean de Haute-Seille may have drawn his material from it. Most commentators, however, agree in general with Gaston Paris (loc. cit., pp. 319-20), who considered that the composition could not be earlier than the end of the Twelfth century and that: "Les deux récits remontent à une même source, et les divergences qu'ils présentent sont dues aux altérations inévitables de la tradition orale".

5) See R. Jaffray, op. cit., p. 37; P. Paris, Histoire littéraire de la France, Vol. XXII, Paris, 1895, p. 389.

the characters are individually named, the mother of the swan-children being called Eliore.

Gaston Paris adopted this name for the version of B.N.12558, in order to distinguish it from another in which all the characters are differently named, and the mother is called Béatrix. ⁽¹⁾ The Béatrix version of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, like the Eliore, forms the introduction to a complete Crusade Cycle: Renaut, the jongleur who produced this definitive version early in the Thirteenth century, though he probably drew his material from a text similar to that of B.N.12558, ⁽²⁾ shaped it deliberately for this function. This involved one fundamental alteration: whereas in the Eliore version the swan-children are saved from the machinations of their grandmother by the one girl amongst them, in the Béatrix her role is taken by one of the boys, who becomes the swan-knight of the later parts of the cycle.

This form of the Naissance became the prototype from which many French redactions were taken throughout the Middle Ages, and on which most of the foreign language versions were based. ⁽³⁾ There can be no doubt that it is the source of Chevalerie Asseigne: in general narrative outline, in the roles played by the various characters and in the names given to them, the English poem is a Béatrix version of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne. Unlike the Eliore, however, this version exists

1) See his Review of Todd's edition in Rom., XII, Paris, 1890, pp.314-40.

2) See F.Blondiaux, loc.cit., Vol. XXVIII, p.172; A.Eaton, op.cit., pp.396-7.

3) "La forme toute chevaleresque que nous offre le poème de Béatrix a fait oublier les autres et a fourni la matière de la rédaction en prose des versions étrangères...." (G.Paris, loc.cit., p.327.)

All those who have attempted to classify the manuscripts of the Crusade Cycle, whether or not they are concerned with the Naissance, agree in distinguishing two groups of texts so different in content as to constitute separate redactions. Despite this difference, and a wide degree of variation between individual manuscripts within each group, both redactions contain Béatrix versions of the Naissance and both are therefore potential sources of Chevalere Assigne. The older of these is Bernut's compilation of the early Thirteenth century, and his name appears in a number of the manuscripts:

A

(1)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 1621. French verse.

This manuscript, variously dated in the mid- and late Thirteenth century (H.A. Smith, loc. cit., p.150; A. Batem, op. cit., p.28) is generally considered to be the oldest of the Béatrix texts, presenting Bernut's redaction, comparatively unaltered, in its original form (P. Paris, Les Manuscrits Français de la Bibliothèque du roi, Vol. VI, p.183; Leroux de Linzy, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes, Vol. II, p.441). It is regarded as the prototype with which the other manuscripts in this group are to be compared and to which they are said to conform in general content and narrative outline. Several of the opening leaves have been torn away, and the greater part of the Naissance is missing, so that it has been necessary to rely on this conformity between the texts: "il est facile de combler cette lacune en consultant les autres manuscrits et la traduction en prose, qui, dans la première partie, paraissent s'écarter fort peu du texte du n° 1621" (H. Pigeonneau, op. cit., p.154). Recent commentators have been more sceptical of the identity of the manuscripts within the group. Hippeau, in his edition, supplied the missing pages by printing the corresponding portion of B.N. 12569 (vide infra) without indicating other than verbal differences between the two texts: "V... wodurch in den gedruckten text nicht allein orthographische, sondern auch inhaltliche verschiedenheiten gelangt sind" (A.G. Krüger, Die Quellen, etc., p.29).

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 786. French verse.

"Le récit de ce manuscrit se confond avec celui du 1621"
(A. Batem, op. cit., p.103.).

1) Edited, in part, by C. Hippeau, La Chanson du Chevalier au Cygne et de Godafrid de Bouillon, 2 vols., Paris, 1874-7.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 795. French verse.

This manuscript is usually classed with the preceding one: "La version qu'il nous donne du mythe des Enfants-Cygnés est très voisine de la version précédente! "En général la récit est plus abrégé que dans les deux manuscrits précédents et nous avons observé de nombreuses omissions! (A.Hatem, op.cit., p.106).

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 12569. French verse.

"La version des Enfants-Cygnés.....ne s'écarte pas ici des versions précédentes...." (A.Hatem, op.cit., p.113). Pigeonneau considered this as the verbal equivalent of B.N.1621, the manuscript edited by him, but others have had some doubts as to the identity of the two texts (vide supra).

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal: 3139. French verse.

This text has been the cause of some confusion in the classification of the Naissance manuscripts. For the first 1345 lines it follows roughly the text of B.N.12558, giving an Elixe version, then switches to a Béatrix form: "à partir du fol.9, le 3139 suit le 1621, le 756 et le 12569" (A.Hatem, op.cit., p.109). According to Gaston Paris (Rom., XIX, p.328) this compilation is the work of a copyist who wished to transcribe Béatrix from a manuscript imperfect at the beginning: "Il a'est tiré d'affaire en empruntant le texte d'Elixe jusqu'à l'endroit où commençait son manuscrit acéphale de Béatrix, s'efforçant d'adapter le commencement à la suite"; by changing the character names and removing contradictions in the plot. His failure to reconcile the two versions completely makes his method obvious. This can, therefore, be considered as a Béatrix text of the same general group as B.N.1621.

Paris, Biblioteca Nazionale: L.iii, 25. French verse.

This manuscript, badly damaged by a fire at the Paris library in 1710, survives in fragments only. According to a catalogue description of 1749 it began with lines very similar to the invocation which opens Pigeonneau's text (at this point, B.N.12569; cf. 11.11-12) (A.G. Krüger, Die Quellen, etc., p.30) and may be tentatively included in this group.

London, British Museum: Royal 15 B.vi. French verse.

The discrepancies between the various accounts given of this manuscript exemplify the difficulty of making even a tentative grouping of Naissance texts. Jaffray (op.cit., p.53) describes it as "giving a version which corresponds in general with the manuscripts at Paris"; and Pigeonneau (op.cit., p.245) as "une reproduction à peu près textuelle du n°1621 de notre bibliothèque nationale". Yet it is obvious even from the catalogue description (E.L.O. Ward, Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, Vol. I, London, 1883, pp.708-10) that it must

contain a much abbreviated form of the Cygné Cycle. "Es sind in der handschrift fast alle bräuchen des kreuzzugzyklus wiedergegeben, aber in starker verkürzung, und zählen die einzelnen gedichte in dieser bearbeitung, daher zusammen nur ca. 5800 verse" (A.G. Krüger, Die Quellen, etc., p. 30). Even within the short section to which Chevalere Assigne corresponds this abbreviation is apparent: in Hippen's edition of B.M. 12569 and B.M. 1621 it extends to 1807 lines, whereas in the British Museum manuscript it is only 1065 lines. From the transcript which I have made of this portion it is clear that Royal 15 B.vi follows the general narrative sequence of the poem edited by Hippen, both in incident and in descriptive detail, and that it has many verbal parallels. It can therefore be legitimately included in the same manuscript group. Yet its difference in scale, its many omissions of detail and abbreviations of narrative, suggest that other texts included in the group may conceal equally individual versions beneath their external uniformity.

(1)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 781. French prose.

This manuscript, which represents the normal process of recasting the long poetic cycles in prose during the later Middle Ages, is considered to be the oldest among such redactions of the Chevalier au Cygne (R. Jaffray, op.cit., p. 65). It gives a much abbreviated form of the cycle, based, according to different opinions, on Royal 15 B.vi (H.A. Todd, loc.cit., p. viii) or on RM. 1621 (H. Pigeonneau, op.cit., p. 186). "Cette dernière assertion est fort douteuse et n'est nullement démontrée. Il est en effet fort à craindre que cette traduction en prose ne soit faite sur une autre version perdue" (A. Hates, op.cit., pp. 97-8). In spite of disagreement as to the exact original on which it is based, it seems likely that this is a Béatrix text of the same general type as the others listed here.

(2)

Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson Misc. 358. Latin prose.

This text, considerably later in date than the others in the group (de Heiffenberg, op.cit., p. clx), dates it as Fifteenth century) was selected by A.G. Krüger ("Der mittelhochdeutschen Romanse Chevalere Assigne", Archiv, LXXVII, Braunschweig, 1887, p. 172) as providing, in many circumstances, a closer parallel to the English poem than Royal 15 B.vi, identified by Bibus (vide supra, p. 455) as its source. He admits, however, that there are details in which the English version disagrees with the Latin and suggests that both probably derive from a common form, distinct from, though related to, the

1) Edited, in part, by H.A. Todd, La Enlance de Chevalier au Cygne, in P.M.L.A., IV, Baltimore, pp. 95-102.

2) Edited by Baron de Heiffenberg, le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroid de Bouillon, Vol. I, Brussels, 1846, pp. 181-203.

parent version of Royal 15 B.vi. In general outline the Latin follows the French text edited by Hippeau, though it is more fully elaborated (J. Huot, loc. cit., p. 211) — and may be included with the other manuscripts of this group.

A(b)

London, British Museum: Add.36615. French verse.

Nothing is known of this manuscript apart from the description of it given in the Museum catalogue (Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the years 1900-1905, London, 1907, pp. 157-8) according to which it contains a full Crusade Cycle, and gives a form of the Naissance distinct both from the Hippeau text and from that edited by de Reiffenberg. "Substantially, though with many variations, the text is, for Branch I, that of la Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, ed. H.A. Todd..." But the characters bear the same names as in Hippeau's edition: "a form which combines the incidents of Elioxe with the nomenclature of Béatrix" (op. cit., pp. 157-8). I have examined the manuscript itself, but it would be difficult to analyse thoroughly without some weeks of work as the opening section is in very poor condition. "The first eight leaves are wrongly bound, the proper order being ff. 1, 2, 5-8, 3, 4. Then comes a lacuna, probably of sixteen leaves. After f. 82 is another lacuna, apparently of seven leaves" (op. cit., p. 158). Furthermore, the opening leaves are so darkened and spotted by damp as to be scarcely legible. The Naissance apparently begins with the meeting of a king and a pucelle beside a fountain. So woe the maiden and she prophesies

Et tu de vii enfans me feras enfanter:
Les vi ierent fil et pucelle au vis oler
Et le septieme enfant..... (f. 2 v°.)

They return to the court, are married with great rejoicing, and, while the king is absent at the wars, the queen bears seven children at one birth. Here the first major lacuna begins. In Hippeau's version the couple are already married before the story opens, and the king is not absent at the time of the birth, so MS. Add.36615 cannot be regarded as a Béatrix text, although that is the name given to the queen and the other characters are also named as in the manuscripts of group A. It seems best, therefore, to classify it separately from the two main groups discussed here.

B

(2)

Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale: 10391. French verse.

This manuscript, and the others classed with it, contain a version of the Crusade Cycle differing so widely from those listed above

- 1) In the Catalogue of Additions kept in the British Museum Manuscript Room this passage has been altered in ink. I give the revised account which is, presumably, official.
- 2) Edited by Baron de Reiffenberg, Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godofroid de Bouillon, Vol. I, Brussels, 1846.

as to constitute a distinct redaction. The manuscripts are comparatively late (mid-fifteenth century according to E. Roy (loc.cit., p.419)), and the version of the Chevalier au Cygne which they give was composed in the mid-fourteenth century. (A. Bossuat, Le Moyen Âge, Paris, 1931, p.67). So far as the Salience is concerned the text combines some elements from the Liore with much that is new: "Mais l'auteur de la compilation belge a dû également connaître des versions identiques à celles des manuscrits de Paris..." (A. Hatem, op.cit., p.57). A Béatrix version apparently served as the basis of the new redaction, but it was so freely handled that scholars are agreed in regarding this as a distinct form and not merely as a recopying of the earlier one.

(1)

Lyons, Bibliothèque Municipale: 744. French verse.

This manuscript is regarded as a copy of the preceding one, made about the same time (E. Roy, loc.cit., p.419), and, apart from some minor variations, giving the same text (A. G. Krüger, Rom., XXVIII, p.422).

Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek: fonds Thott 416. French prose.

According to the catalogue description (H. G. L. Abrahams, Description des manuscrits français du moyen âge de la bibliothèque royale de Copenhague, Copenhagen, 1944, pp.122-7) this is a manuscript of the sixteenth century containing a prose redaction of the early sections of the Crusade Cycle, made c.1465-75 by Berthault de Villebrosme. It is, apparently, an abbreviated form of the version published by de Raiffenberg (H. Figeonneau, op.cit., p.254) and can, therefore, be included in this group of manuscripts.

In addition to the surviving manuscripts a number of early printed

(2)

texts are also known. They contain another prose redaction of the

(3)

cycle, made in 1499 by Pierre Desrey de Troyes, printed at Paris by

Jehan Petit in 1500, and several times reprinted in the course of the

1) We have information that in addition to the Brussels and Lyons MSS. a third text of the same redaction was copied at the same period (A. G. Krüger, Rom., XXVIII, p.426). This has now disappeared: "Mais il y a eu bien d'autres manuscrits, consultés et cités jusqu'au commencement du XVIII^e siècle." (E. Roy, loc.cit., p.419). A large number of references to lost texts are given by de Raiffenberg (op.cit., pp.cxi-cxii) and no doubt many manuscripts of both redactions of Béatrix have disappeared without leaving any trace.

2) For details of these texts see B. Wolke, Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500 (Société de publications romanes et françaises, III), Geneva, 1954, p.32.

3) See E. Roy, loc.cit., p.420.

(1)

Sixteenth century. This, like the version by Berthault de Villebresme, was based on a form very similar to that contained in the Brussels

(2)

manuscript, and can, therefore, be classed with the texts of group B.

The surviving manuscripts and printed texts are no doubt only a small proportion of those which originally existed, and there may well have been other redactions of the Crusade Cycle which are not represented amongst them. They provide, however, the only available guide to the forms in which the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne may have reached the author of Chevaliers Asseigne. This is the story of the Swan-Children as recounted by him in the alliterative poem--

As a punishment for doubting that twins might be fathered by one man, Betryce, wife of King Oriens of Lyor, bears seven children, six boys and a girl, at the same birth, each wearing a silver chain about the neck. Matabryne, the king's mother, instructs her servant Markus to drown the children and presents her son with seven new-born puppies as his offspring. She urges him to burn the young queen and he, at last, unwillingly consents to the imprisonment of his wife. Meanwhile Marcus, finding himself unable to kill the children, leaves them in a forest where they are discovered and cared for by a hermit. Eleven years later a forester, Walkedras, coming upon the children by accident, informs Matabryne and is sent by her to kill them and bring back their silver chains. But on his return he can find only six of the children, one boy being absent with the hermit, and when he cuts off their chains they

1) Desrey's version was re-issued at Paris in 1511, again in 1523, and at Lyons by Arnoullet, in 1530 (V. Blondeaux, loc.cit., XXXIX, p.372).

2) According to Pignonneau (op.cit., p.255): "son premier livre est la traduction exacte de la première partie du poème publié par H. de Reiffenberg"

become swans and fly away. Iatebryne orders a goldsmith to make a cup from the chains, but, finding that one is more than sufficient for the purpose, he secretes the remaining five. Now the queen-mother prevails upon Oriens to have Betryce burnt. On the night before the execution an angel warns the hermit that he must send the surviving child to champion his mother in her need. Coming to court the child offers to fight a judicial combat against Malkedras, the old queen's champion, to prove the innocence of Betryce. He is baptised and christened Nyas, is knighted by the king and armed for battle. In the duel Nyas' horse attacks his opponent's mount, and Malkedras, having mocked at the cross on the child's shield, is blinded by an adder which springs from it, and finally beheaded. Nyas reveals the whole story to his father, the chains are recovered from the goldsmith, and five of the other children are restored to human form and baptised, while the sixth remains a swan.

In general outline the same incidents and the same sequence of events are found in the manuscripts of group A, at least in so far as these are represented by the texts available for examination. ⁽¹⁾ And the same narrative outline is also to be found in the manuscripts of group B, at least in so far as they are represented by de Reiffenberg's edition of the Brussels MS. They, too, contain a Béatrix version of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, no doubt originally derived from a text very similar to those in group A. But in the later redaction many new incidents have been added to the original narrative: the beginning of the story is carried back to the marriage of King Orien's

1) That is to say: B.N. 12569 and B.N. 1621 (ed. Hippeau), B.N. 781 (ed. Todd), Rawlinson Misc. 358 (ed. de Reiffenberg), and its transcript of Royal 15 B. vi.

parents; his own wooing of Betryce is recounted; after the multiple birth a council of nobles debates the punishment of the queen; the hermit prophesies to Gnyas that his descendant, Godfrey of Bouillon, will capture Jerusalem and Antioch; before the count Oriens visits the hermitage and vows to build a monastery on the spot. There have also been numerous alterations of detail which do not affect the narrative outline: Betryce makes her unfortunate remark about the origin of twins after, instead of before, her own conception; Matabryne has a female accomplice in substituting the pups for the new-born children; the role of the forester is divided, -- Malkedras remains the old queen's champion, but it is a new character, Savaris, who takes away the silver chains; etc., etc.. No trace of these additions to the story appears in Chevalere Ausigne, and in every case where there is significant variation in matters of detail the English poem agrees with the published texts of group A, and not with de Reiffenberg's edition of a group B manuscript. If we did not know of the existence of the former group it would be logical enough, in view of the general narrative similarity, to suppose that the additional material of B had merely been ignored by the English redactor in making an abbreviated version of the Naissance, and that the disagreement in detail was due to deliberate alteration on his part. As it is, however, it seems more reasonable to suppose that he obtained the common Béatrix material from a text which had neither the additions nor the alterations of the B group. And, similarly, it seems unlikely, since Chevalere Ausigne has no admixture of Elloxe material, that it can have been based on a hybrid text of the type represented by British Museum, Add. 36615.

Though it would seem from this that the source of Chevalere

Assigne is most likely to be discovered within group A, it would be unwise to accept any single manuscript as representative of the group as a whole. The basic plot of the alliterative poem is common to them all, but there are variations peculiar to each; some mere differences of detail, others more extreme. On the basis of such variants it has been possible, so far as individual branches of the Crusade Cycle are concerned, to establish sub-divisions within the general classification of texts. Such classifications do not necessarily apply to the Naissance section of the manuscripts, but B.N.736, B.N.735, B.N.12569 and the Arsenal MS. have been tentatively identified as containing a version different from that of B.N.1621, with which they are generally grouped. In the absence of a critical text and a definitive classification of the manuscripts it is necessary, in seeking the source of Chevalere Assigne, to consider all the versions at present available.

The variants amongst the proper names indicate the general nature of the problem:-

	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>L</u>
<u>Chevalere Assigne</u>	Royal 15 B.vi.	B.N.12569 and B.N.1621.	B.N.736	Rawlinson Misc.358.
Lyer	L'Illefort	L'Illefort	Illefort Aillefort	Belefort

- 1) H.A.Smith(loc.cit., XVIII, p.78) from his examination of the Godfroi de Bouillon MSS. concluded: "Our classification shows, then, that there are four versions which have lines of derivation from the original independent of one another, and which are consequently of distinct and co-ordinate value in establishing a critical text"
- 2) "...it is certain that the relations of the various MSS. of the Cycle of the Crusade are often different in the different branches, even in those so closely related as the Swan-children, the Swan-knight and the Godfrey branches, of which the last two are usually treated as one" (Ibid., Note, p.75).
- 3) See R.Jaffray, op.cit., p.51.

Oriens	Orient Orient	Orians Orient	Orians Orient	Orians
Matabryne	Matebrune	Matabrune	Matabrune	Matebrune
Bewtrys Betryoe	Beatriz	Beatris Beatrix	Beatris	Beatrice
Markus	Marques	Marques	Markes Maroon	Markus
Malkedras	Malquarres Maucares	Malquarres	Malquarres Mauquarres	Mauquarre
Elyas	Elyas Helyas	Elyas	Hely Helyas	Elyas
Aunthepas	Maudras	Montbas	_____	_____
Salanere	_____	Salomas	_____	_____
Paranoe	Ferrant	Bauçant	_____	Parantus
Chevalere assygne	Chevalier au signe	Chevalier au cisme	Chevalier le chisme	Milite de la cygne
Vryens	Oriens	Oriens	_____	Sampson
Oryens	Orient	Orians	_____	Oriant
Assakarye	Saccharies	Sacaryes	Sacaries	Petrus
Gadyfere	Jehan	Johans	Jehans	Johannes
Rose	Rosette	Rosete	Rose	Rosetta Rosula

Some of these names are so similar in all versions as to be obviously related, though faulty transcription by redactor or scribe has altered them slightly from text to text: 'Oriens', 'Matabryne', 'Betryoe', 'Rose', -these at least would suggest a common source for all the versions, English, French, and Latin alike. A few are so distorted in the English version as to suggest that the translator either took considerable liberties with the forms in his original, or used a text which differed in these particulars from the manuscripts under examination: 'Lyor', 'Malkedras', 'Aunthepas', 'Gadyfere'. But in general the forms are

conflicting, each of the texts listed having some which associate it with the English and others which militate against it. MS. Royal 15 E. vi (R) has a general similarity of forms, but omits the minor character Salamere, who is found, similarly named, in the composite text (E) edited by Hippeau, and presumably, therefore, in the version used by the English poet. But that version cannot have been R as we know it: Hippeau's text gives the name of the hero's horse as 'Baucant', while the English poem has 'Feraunce', a form which is supported by R and by the Latin version of Rawlinson B.1.358(L). The abbreviated prose version edited by Todd from B.N. 781(T) lacks a number of names which are found in Chevaliers Assigne, and are authenticated by their presence in one or other of the remaining texts. The Latin version, —and presumably, therefore, the French text from which it was derived—, provides a closer parallel to the English forms 'Markus' and 'Enyas' than any of the others cited, but it is discounted as a possible source by the names 'Belefort', 'Sampson' and 'Petrus'. This evidence, so far as it goes, suggests that none of the texts available for examination contains the version of the Naissance used by the English translator, since that version must have contained some form of the names 'Enyas', 'Salamere', 'Feraunce', 'Vryens', 'Oryens', 'Assamerye', together with the names common to all the manuscripts considered here.

Some minor variations in detail amongst the texts suggest much the same conclusion:—

- I) Matabryne, when she shows the pups to her son, makes no specific charge against Betryce in the English versions:—

"Sone, paye þe with þy qwene, & se of her berthe."
(1.55.)

The E text is equally vague, though in different terms:—

"Elle a fait contre Dieu et contre toute gent:
Elle n'est pas loiaus, pour voir le vous orçant" (11.214-15.)

In R, however, there is a direct charge of bestial intercourse:-

"Elle a eu vii chiens, il n'y a aultre enfant.
Voes les ici tous vii, eulx sont en mon devant;
A vii chiens soit livree, vez ci le provement? (ll.140-42.);

while in L this idea is strongly underlined and several times repeated, during a long scene which has no counterpart in the other texts examined:-

".....scio sine dubio quod a septem canibus vit fedata?
(p.184, l.8.)
"Videm modo, fili, hos septem canes de humano semine non
potuisse produci. Procul dubio non est aliud nisi quod
cum canibus est adulterata....V (p.184, ll.15-16.)

In T the charge seems oddly confused:-

"Veschi le present que vo femme vous a aporte, et s'est
delivree de ches vii cayaus comme le plus desloiaus qui
onques fust, n'aine de nului ne se garda, et par maintes
fois l'a je trouvee avecu autrui que avecu vous. Mais
pour vostre honneur m'en taisoie. Or s'est delivree de (1)
ches vii chiens que vous ichi vean. (p.96, ll.4-8.)

Although the direct accusation is made elsewhere in R (ll.893-4.), and is found in the corresponding section of the English poem (l.234.) it seems most reasonable to presume that here the redactor followed a text which did not contain the direct charge, and certainly not an elaborate version like that of L.

- II) The versions also differ as to the length of Petryce's imprisonment, which the alliterative poem gives as eleven years:-

And þus þe lady lyuede þere elleuen ȝere. (l.39.)

which is the period named in R:-

Or lurrez de la dame, qui a tort est en mue,
xi ans fut en la chartre, poi et poi menjue, (ll.190-91.).

At the corresponding point in L no specific period is mentioned, but elsewhere a similar passage occurs:-

Interat innocens regina, carcere clausa mactans et
undecim annis injurias et languores tollerans.... (p.190, ll.5-6.).

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- 1) The references to L (Rawlinson Misc.358) and T (B.V.781) are to the page and line in the editions of Baron de Reiffenberg (Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroid de Bouillon, Vol.I, Brussels, 1846, pp.181-205), and E.A.Todd (La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, in P.M.L.A., IV, Baltimore, 1889, pp.95-102) respectively.

H, on the other hand, has:-

Et la dame est remese dolente et irascue.
xv ans fu en la cartre, poi boit et poi manje. (11.285-6.);

with which T agrees, though at a slightly different point in the story:-

....et avoit ja esté en chartre bien xv ans c'orques
saoule n'i fu. (p.97,1.32.).

The forms as a whole suggest that though the English poem might be based on R or L it can hardly have obtained this particular detail from either H or T.

III) According to the English text, Marlowe, when sent to drown the children:-

.....wente porow a foreste fowre longe myle,
(1.95.)

which appears in the R version as:-

Et vait par la forest bien iiij lieues grans, (1.198.).

The H text gives a different reading:-

Et va par la forest plus de ii lieues grans. (1.294.);

while L and T mention no specific distance. Though the units of measurement do not correspond, the English version seems more likely to have been derived from R, than from L or T, or even from H.

IV) In the English poem Matabryne asks the goldsmith to make her a cup from the silver chains, and this he does from half of one of them, keeping the remainder:-

He toke þat opur fyue & fro þe fyver hem leyde,
And made nollye þe cuppe of naluendelle þe sixte.
(11.159-60.)

But in H he makes two cups:-

Cele fondi si bien, ce oï tesmongner,
Qu'il en fist ii grans coupes, sans point de delaiier.
(11.574-5.);

and keeps one for himself. Similarly in R:-

Et elle font si bien, ce ouï tesmongner,
Qu'il en fist deux grans copes, quar Dieu lui vult aider.
(11.349-50.);

and in L:-

Quam ut liquefacit cepit argentum illud in brevi sic
crescere et multiplicari quod argentarius ille de dicto
metallo duos magnos crateras excolavit. (p.189,11.9-10.).

But in T, as in the English version, only one cup is mentioned:-

Adont prist une des oaines et le forga, et en fist une
m'lt riche coupe. (p. 97, 11.22-23.).

This may merely represent a simplification of his source on the redactor's part, but it may equally well suggest that that source was T rather than H, L, or R.

V) Amongst his other commands to the hermit the angel says:-

.....& loke þat he be cristened;
And kalle hym Enyas to name, for awte þat may be-falle,
(11.203-4.)

There is nothing to correspond to this in H, L or R, but in T the same command is given at this point, - though the form of the proper name differs:-

Et li quemande qu'il se fache baptisier et qu'il ait
non Helyas. (p. 97, 11.45-6.).

This again would suggest T rather than the other texts as a possible source of the English redaction.

VI) Then the hermit tells Enyas that he must fight on horseback the child asks:-

"What beste is þat?" quod þe chylde, "lyonys wylde?
Or elles wode? or watur?" quod þe chylde panne.
(11.214-15.)

This is roughly matched by the passage in H:-

"Quel beste est-ce ceiaus?" ce respont, "pié estant?
Samble leu ou lion? va-il esmelement? (11.739-40.).

But the essential reference to the horse as resembling a lion or other wild beast is lacking in H:-

"Et quel beste est cheval? ne le celez neant? (1.461.).

and there is nothing corresponding to this passage in L or T. This would suggest H, rather than any of the other texts examined here, as the source of the alliterative poem.

VII) The hermit's reply to the question about the horse is:-

"I seyþe neuur none", quod þe hermyte, "but by þe mater
of bokes:
They seyn he hath a feyre hedde & fowre lymes hys;
(11.216-17.)

This denial of personal knowledge is found in H:-

"Certes", fait li hermites, "je ne sai son sanblant: (1.741.);

but there is no description of the horse, whereas in R there is some description but no denial of knowledge on the hermit's part:-

"Certes" dist li hermite, "c'est belle beste et grant"
(L.462.).

This passage, like the preceding one, is missing in L and T. It is possible that the English poet was inventing here, but the combination of details found separately in two of the French versions is curious. It may suggest neither R nor H as the source but some combination of them,--and certainly not L or T.

VIII) According to the English version Enyas is attended by two godfathers and a godmother at his christening:-

The abbot maketh hym a fonte & was his godfader,
The erle of Aunthepas he was another,
The countes of Salanere was his godmoder; (ll.207-9.)

as in H:-

L'abes en est parrins et li dus de Montbas,
Et une rice dame qui ot non Salomas. (ll.1157-8.);

whereas the R version makes no mention of the godmother:-

L'abbé si fut parrain et le duc de Maudras. (l.716.);

and neither of the prose versions, L and T, mentions any godparents at all. This would suggest H, rather than the other texts examined, as the source of the redaction.

IX) The description of Enyas' shield is also significant:-

And a wayte shelde with a crosse vpon þe posse hinged,
And nit was wryten þer-vpon þat to Enyas nit sholde:
(ll.231-2.)

The same general description is found in R:-

Les armes apporterent les deux varles aval,
Et l'escu et la croix de Dieu l'esperital; (ll.734-5.);

and, more fully, in H:-

A l'entrer de la sale pent i escus listés,
Que Dix i envoie par ses saintes bontés.
Il estoit trestout blans, n'ert autrement dorés;
D'une grant crois vermelle estoit enluminés.
Li blans de cel escu estoit enargentés
La crois qui ert vermelle, ce saciés de vertés,
Benefie justice, hardement et fiertés.
Par desous fu escrit: "De par Diu fu donnés" (ll.1194-1201.).

This passage is lacking altogether in T and the essential detail, -that the shield was destined for Enyas-, is found only in L:-

Qui cum intrassent turrin, in qua servabantur arma regia,
viderunt illic subito pendentem coram oculis eorundem
scutum albo nitore nitentem, cruce rubeam in medio
continentem. Et cognoverunt quod, ex speciali Dei
dono, clipeus ille fuerat puero preparatus. Nam in
illo sculpte fuere litere auree hanc sententiam
continentes: Clipeus iste puero Enes preparatus est
qui eum proteget et ab omni malo defendet quociens
eum gestet. (p.194, l.34 - p.195, l.4.).

This would suggest L, rather than any of the other texts, as the source of the English redaction.

- X) The mention of Matabryne's flight in the English poem makes it clear that she is on horseback:-

Thenne sawe þe qwene Matabryne her man so murdered;
Turned her brydelle & towarde þe towne rydetne;
(11.340-41.)

Similarly, in H:-

S'en va grant aleüre fuiant parmi la jant,
Sor i ronci sans sele est montée plorant;
Ains ne fina de corre desi à Malbruiant, (11.1684-6.);

In L:-

.....et, ascenso caballo, celerius fugit ad quoddam
castellum nomine Eountwante..... (p.196, ll.21-2.);

and in T:-

.....ele monte et s'en va a un castel que ele avoit qui
a non Malbruians. (p.99, l.37.);

whereas R lacks this detail:-

S'en ala grant aleüre, fuyant entre la gent,
Onc ne fina de courre si vint a Malbruiant, (11.982-3.).

Something apparently suggested the idea of a flight on horseback to the redactor, and it certainly cannot have been a text of the R form.

- XI) The alliterative poet's description of the swan which could not be restored to human form:-

Hit was doole for to se þe sorowe þat ne made;
He bote hym self with his bylle þat alle his breste bledde,
And alle his feyre federes fomed vpon blode,
And alle formerknea þe watur þer þe swanne swymmetne;
(11.359-62.)

is closer to the comparatively full version of H:-

iiii fois s'est pasmée, puis brait à longe alaine;
A son bec se depiece; tote la chara H saine: (11.1750-81.);

or L:-

Sextus remansit cignus quia catenam non habebat, et illico
cecidit velut mortuus pro dolore, et ita verberavit aquas
alis suis quod aqua decolorata fuit, multis flentibus et
lamentantibus vices ejus qui ad spectaculum convenerunt.
Sicque percussit semetipsum rostro suo quod cruor ubertim
de corpore suo fluxit. (p.197, 11.28-32.)

or T:-

.....qui m'lt demena grant dolour d'estrange maniere,
et se debat de ses eles et deplume del bec et demaine
grant dolour. (p.100, 11.28-30.);

than to the single line given in R:-

Par trois fois c'est pasmé et brait a longne alainne,
(1.1051.).

The English poet might have invented the descriptive details here, but the similarity between his version and that of L suggests that the Latin text, rather than H or T, may have furnished the passage, which, at all events, can scarcely have come from R.

This evidence seems, at first sight, contradictory: each of the Naissance texts examined has some detail or incident in which it provides a closer parallel to the English version than any of the others, but each is, conversely, invalidated as a potential source by a number of the other passages cited. The negative aspect of the evidence is, however, the more important. In a few instances it is of doubtful validity, but taking into account only those cases which are clear-cut, there is sufficient evidence to show that none of the four texts examined can have been the immediate source of Chevalere Assigne: H is ruled out by examples II, III, IV, V and IX; L by I, III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII; R by IV, V, VI, VIII, IX, X and XI; and T by II, III, VI, VII, VIII and IX. Whatever the nature of the original used by the redactor it

must have contained something analogous to the English reading in all eleven of these passages, together with the combination of proper names indicated above.

The type of evidence on which this conclusion is based makes it obvious that, until all surviving texts of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne have been fully examined and classified definitively, nothing further can be done to determine the nature of the version used by the author of Chevaliers Assigne. The features which associate the alliterative poem with one or other of the published texts can only be matters of detail: all four versions of the original are so similar in outline, and the redaction is so brief that its lack of certain narrative incidents tells us nothing of value about the source, as these episodes may merely have been omitted by the translator from a version identical with those known to us. Only the trifling variations in nomenclature, in factual or descriptive detail, which are paralleled in one or other of the Naissance texts, can indicate the nature of the source, and then only in that particular. Since this evidence is conflicting, -not indicating any individual text, but each in turn-, it is necessary, in determining the nature of the redaction, to take all four into consideration. Each can throw some light on the content of the original version. T, in spite of its brevity, is closer to the English poem in some details (vide supra, examples IV and V) than any of the other texts. And though the references to Enyas as 'Chevalere Assigne' suggest that the redactor must have known a French version of the Chevalier au Cygne, the Latin text also has some passages (vide supra, examples IX and XI) which provide the closest parallel to the English poem in these instances. But the chief value of these prose texts lies in the indications which they provide of the nature of the earlier poetic versions on which they

were presumably based. The general conduct of the redaction is easier to visualise in comparing the English work with the two verse texts, (1) H and R, though the difference in scale between these is quite considerable. It would be unwise to assume that the brief English poem is more likely to have been derived from an abbreviated version similar to R, than from one on the same scale as H,--which, in the relevant section, is some 750 lines longer--since the English has some details in common with H (vide supra, examples VI and VIII) which are not found in R. It seems best, therefore, to follow the sequence of both these versions in attempting to discover the general nature of the redaction, and to take the prose texts into consideration wherever they are relevant.

Both the French poetic versions, H and R, begin with a preamble in which the author, in the manner of a jongleur, calls for the attention of his audience, states the general nature and content of his story, vouches for its authenticity:-

Telz y'a qui nous chantent de la ronde table,
Des manteaulx angolés de samin et de sable,
Mais je ne vous diray ne mençonge, ne fable,
Quer il est en ystoire, c'est chose veritable; (R: 11.3-6.);

and connects its origin with a famous literary figure:-

Entecrist la fist metre la bone dame Orable,
Qui moult fu preus et sage, cortoise et amiable,
Dedans les murs d'Orange, la fort cité mirable. (H: 11.18-20.).

Both texts give much the same introduction, but the difference in scale between them is significant: the 32 lines of H are represented by only 15 lines in the R version. The latter has been abbreviated by emitting the opening laisse of the H version (the content of which is, in any case, repeated by the two which follow) and by dropping every line which is

1) Vide supra, pp. 165-6.

not essential to the narrative. This is true of the relationship of the two texts throughout the section represented by Chevalere Assigne: the narrative outline in both is very similar, the sequence of ideas is identical, and almost every laisse in R survives, with the original scheme of ~~assurances~~, in R, though often at less than half the original length. The economy of R is one of detail and expression rather than of incident. The R text is wordy in the extreme, repeating the same idea several times in different terms, calling for the attention of the audience at the opening of each new section in the narrative, and re-echoing the last lines of one laisse in the opening verses of the next. By avoiding such redundancy and by economy in expression, rather than by the omission of incidents, R tells the story of Chevalere Assigne in 1065 lines, whereas H has 1507. Whether or not the version used by the English poet was closer in scale and proportion to R than to H, the redaction, with its 370 lines, must represent a drastic abbreviation in which much of the original material has been ignored. The introductory verses in the French poetic texts, for example, find no place in the English work. It is true that neither of the two prose versions contains such an introduction, but if the translator used a verse text,--and there are some line by line parallels, to be noted later, which suggest that he did--, he most probably found something of the sort in his source. He may well have felt that the elaborate preamble to a great epic cycle would be out of place as introduction to the comparatively brief and trifling episode which he intended to carve from it.

(1-4 :) He has replaced it with an introduction of a different type:--

Alle weldynge God, whenne it is his wylle,
 Wele he wereth his werke with his owne honde:
 For ofte harmes were hente pat helpe we ne myȝte;
 Nere þe hyȝnes of hym pat lengeth in heuene. (ll. 1-4.)

He substitutes for the bombastic call of the jongleur, with its promise of wonders and excitements, a more sober opening, didactic in tone and moral in intent, announcing the text to be illustrated by the story which follows:-

For this I saye by a lorde was lente in an yle, (1.5.)

This conception of the Swan-Children story as a moral exemplum may have been suggested by something in the source. Both the poetic versions contain a few lines in which Oriens rebukes Betryse for refusing to believe that twins may be fathered by one man, pointing out that under God all things are possible:-

"Certes", dist-il, "ma dame, vos parlez folement;
Dix a de tout pooir; faus est qui ce n'entent!
Par son parler a-on moult grant anui souvent,
Si oem vous orrés dire, se l'histoire n'en ment. (H: 11.69-72.)

But this is a moral of a very different, more limited, nature, and it is not developed as the didactic theme of the narrative. Neither is the text chosen by the English poet, though it is briefly echoed in the closing line of the poem:-

And þus þe botenyng of God browȝte hem to nonde.
(1.370.)

Therefore, although the redactor was probably original in choosing the general moral theme of God's all-powerful guidance and protection as appropriate to the episode which he had selected from the Naissance, -turning as it does upon divine intervention to assist Right against Wrong-, in using it to avoid a bald narrative opening and to give some slight suggestion of formal unity to his poem, he shows no general divergence from the secular tone of the French versions and no marked didactic intention. This passage alone is not enough to suggest that he was more interested in the moral than in the narrative value of his source, and there is nothing analogous to it elsewhere in the redaction.

(5-18 : H.33-49;R.16-24.) The narrative proper begins in much the same way in all versions, French, Latin and English, by introducing the chief characters, establishing their relationship to each other, and outlining the situation in which they find themselves. The English text is only loosely related to the original versions, following H in naming the chief characters at once, and R in stressing the childlessness of the royal couple. Here as elsewhere in the redaction it is not necessary to suppose that the English author found precisely this combination of details in his source. All the essential material could probably have been gathered from any version of the Naissance: for example, though R speaks at first of "ung roy riches et her" and of "soy mere et femme", the character names are given later in the course of the narrative. The arrangement of details may well have been the work of the redactor, who aimed at identifying the characters and putting the reader in possession of the situation as rapidly as possible. The passage is less likely to be a line by line translation of the original than a free reshaping, designed to provide a direct and concise opening to an abbreviated version in which there can be no reiteration, even of fundamental details. As an abbreviation it is far from successful, moving jerkily, switching from topic to topic erratically and incongruously, somewhat vague in meaning and little shorter than the French. Oddly enough, the redactor has preserved the association of the story with the Chevalier au Cygne, naming Oriens as "chefs of pe kynde of Chevaliers assygnz" (l.11.), although it could have no significance for readers who were not already familiar with the opening sections of the Crusade Cycle, since the hero does not embark upon his career as the ~~man~~-knight until after the portion of the original covered by the English redaction.

1780
(19-32 : E.50-72;R.25-46.) A similar clumsiness in abbreviation is responsible for an unsatisfactory version of the lines which follow. All texts of the original begin at once upon the crucial scene in which Betryce doubts the legitimacy of multiple births and is rebuked by the king her husband. The redactor has followed the general sequence of the French poetic versions, but, condensing the material in a somewhat haphazard manner, he has obscured its meaning on several points without achieving any considerable economy in expression. Though he mentions the king's sorrow at the sight of the twins carried by a poor woman he omits the reason for it:-

"Oneques Dieu ne nous vout filz ne fille donner. (R: 1.32.), without which the scene loses much of its significance. It is true that he has previously referred to Oriens' unhappiness over his lack of an heir, but this is a point in which the repetitions of the French are essential and should have been retained. Similarly, by excessive abbreviation, he obscures the meaning of the queen's fatal remark, so that what is explicit in all versions of the original:-

"Sire", ce dist la dame, "vous parles de neant,
Que femme avoir peüst ensemble deux enfant
S'a deux hommes ne s'est livrée charnellement.
Ung en puet elle avoir, pour voir le vous creant,
Mais ja plus n'en ara ung engendrement" (R: 11.36-40.),

becomes confused:-

The qwene nykked hym with nay & seyde, "it is not to leue;
Oon manne for oon chylde & two wymmen for tweyne;
(11.28-29.)

and requires a second attempt to express the same thing:-

Or ellis hit were vnsemelye pynges as me wolde penke,
But eche chylde hadde a fader, now manye so per were."
(11.30-31.)

Finally, by omitting the suggestion that Betryce's doubts are a denial of the power of God, he deprives Oriens' rebuke of most of its meaning.

(33-36 : H.73-87;R.47-52.) This omission,in its turn,weakens the significance of the sequence of events since it is clearly implied in the French that the conception of the seven children,-which follows immediately in all versions-,was a judgement upon the queen for her lack of faith. In describing the event itself the English work follows the poetic texts,but in a greatly abbreviated version,expressing the essential fact in a clumsy manner:-

He gette on here þat same nyȝte resonabullye manye.
[(1.34.) : H.88-94;R.53-61.) In three of the four Naissance texts examined(the exception being the abbreviated prose version T)there follows a short passage in which the news of the queen's conception is celebrated and offerings made at the altar by Oriens and his wife. Most probably this was also in the version used by the English poet, but he has chosen to omit it,-a reasonable measure of abbreviation since it is not vital to the development of the story.]

(1)
(37-45 : H.95-114;R.62-78.) As a result,he passes at once to the birth of the seven children,but the sequence of events is scarcely less abrupt in the original. The four Naissance texts differ in some details of the birth. According to H:-

Au maistre des enfans vii fées i avoit,
Qui les enfans destinent que chacun avenroit. (H: 11.102-3.),
but there is nothing to correspond to this in the other three. Since the fairies are not mentioned by the English poet they were presumably absent from his source,though this is precisely the sort of detail,-interesting but inessential-,which he generally omits from his redaction. A version which aims at a direct and abbreviated

1) Hippeau miscounted the verses on page 5 of his edition and the lines are wrongly numbered from that point onwards,but for the sake of simplicity I have retained the original numbering.

presentation of the story gains rather than loses by omissions of this sort. But other omissions, here as elsewhere, weaken the redaction by obscuring the meaning and suppressing the motivation. At this point, for example, all versions, including the English, show Betryce at her confinement attended only by her mother-in-law. The Naissance texts describe Matabryne's hatred of the young queen and sketch her general character. The details differ somewhat from version to version:-

Au naistre des enfans nulle femme n'avoit,
 Fors une vielle dame, qui en Dieu pou creoit;
 Mere estoit au seigneur, la royne fort hayoit.
 A masser avoir tout son penser estoit. (R: 11.64-7.)

....que ad omne socius perpetrandum fuit paratissima et
 in arte magica nimis edocta, habens in etate circa centum
 annos. (L: p.182, 11.31-2.)

Le vielle se pourpense c'un grant mordre feroit.
 Dyables la semont, qui ele enor faisoit.
 Tele cose pourpense dont venir li devoit
 Grant honte et grant ami que devisé estoit.
 Dame Dix li rendra sa deserte et son droit:
 Ele sera honnie ains k'ele morte soit. (H: 11.109-14.)

But the general picture is of Matabryne as the enemy of God, possessed of a devil, representing the principle of evil in the story and bringing about the action by her motiveless hatred of her daughter-in-law. Although the character of the old queen was of equal importance to the English reader,--especially if the poet, as his introductory lines suggest, intended the story to be taken as an example of the power of God in defending Right against the powers of evil--this passage is greatly weakened in his redaction:-

Ther moste no womman come her nere, but she pat was
 cursed,
 His moder Matabryne, pat cawsed moche sorowe;
 For she know3te to do pat byrtne to a fowle ende.
 (11.33-40.)

[: H.115-140; R.79-91.) The same mixture of gain and loss,
 brought about by a somewhat haphazard system of abbreviation is

demonstrated by the complete omission of what follows in the original. Both the poetic texts,--though H to a much greater extent than R-, occasionally begin a new laisse by summarising the action of the previous one. This is superfluous at the best but would be particularly out of place in the spare, swift-moving narrative of the English version. Here, as elsewhere, the redactor has avoided such repetitions, which, if he used a verse form of the Naissance, were almost certainly found in his source. But he has also ignored the remainder of the laisse, in which Matabryne reminds Betryse of her foolish remark about the multiple origin of twins:-

Or puet dire mon filz, par vostre jugement,
Qu'avec sept hommes avez geü en ung tenant! (R: 11.87-8.)

This scene is found in the four texts of the Naissance under consideration, and there is evidence elsewhere in the English version (vide infra, (75-91 : H.249-86; H.169-91.)) that the redactor had something of the same kind in his source. Failure to include it deprives the remainder of the redaction of much of its effect. Since it is not made clear that Betryse is guilty only in accordance with her own pronouncement, having borne seven children at a birth, and that she knows herself to be innocent of the public charge made against her, of having given birth to dogs, her later sufferings lose something of the bitterness which they have in the original, where she is aware of the deceit practised upon her but powerless to reveal it. And similarly, the full malice of Matabryne in abusing the young queen for one reason and making another, equally false, accusation before the king, is not apparent in the English version. An attentive reading of his source would have shown the redactor that this type of economy in abbreviation was more harmful than helpful.]

(46-56 : H.141-95;R.92-126.) Where he aims at narrative compression and economy in expression, rather than wholesale omission, the English author is more successful. Translating the scene in which the old queen instructs her servant Markus to drown the seven children he follows the general outline of the original, but abbreviates it greatly by turning the dialogue between the two into narrative form, leaving only a single speech by Matabryne which contains the heart of the matter. Nothing is lost by this, but some minor omissions leave the character of Markus comparatively undeveloped: in the French, Matabryne exacts a promise of obedience from her servant before revealing her purpose, and, without this, his reluctance to obey her is insufficiently stressed to prepare the English reader for his failure to carry out her orders. This weakness may be partly, though not entirely, due to the form of the source employed: H and L make Markus curse his mistress behind her back, but this detail is lacking in R and T, as it may have been in the version used by the redactor. So far, however, as this section of the narrative is concerned, the English version is much closer to H than to R, both in the sequence of events and the arrangement of details.

(57-74 : H.196-248;R.127-68.) An attempt by the redactor to break away from the sequence of the original proves unsuccessful. In the original development of the narrative the old queen procures seven pups, comes to the king and accuses Betryse of unnatural intercourse. The English poem, however, first shows the king anxiously waiting for news of the birth, then returns to Matabryne who kills a bitch and takes her pups, and finally switches back again to Oriens. The rearrangement of events may be deliberate, or it may merely be due to the redactor having forgotten the exact sequence of incidents in translating a lengthy

section of his source after a single reading of the passage. The result is unfortunate, involving disruption in the narrative sequence and abrupt changes of scene within the space of a few lines. And, inevitably, the story seems much more artificial and incredible in the stilted English version than in the more plausible and circumstantial French. The haphazard nature of the redaction is particularly obvious in the argument between Matabryne and her son as to what shall be done with Betryce. The dialogue form of the original is retained, but the exchanges are so abbreviated as to lose most of their force and even, in some cases, their meaning. The accusation against the young queen, for example, is only vaguely implied:-

"Sone, paye pe with py qwene & se of ner bertne"

(1.05.)

though in R the charge is explicit:-

"A vii chiens soit livree, ves oi le provement.

Contre Dieu a ouvré et contre toute gent. (R: 11.142-3.)

Vagueness in a detail of this sort weakens the whole redaction, since it obscures the argument by which Oriens is persuaded to countenance the ill-treatment of his wife. Rather surprisingly, H, normally the fuller of the two verse texts, lacks the crucial line here. This might suggest that it was also lacking in the form of the Naissance used by the English author, but the same charge is made elsewhere in H (L.894-5.) and at the corresponding point in the English poem (1.234.), and, in addition, there is evidence in the passage immediately following to suggest that the redactor found it in his source at this point.

(75-91 : H.249-86; R.169-91.) Although following in general outline the French account of how Betryce was seized and thrown into prison on the orders of the old queen, the English poet has inserted here a few lines in which Matabryne abuses her daughter-in-law:-

Thow hast by-gylethe my sone; it shalle be werke sorowe:
Bothe howndes & men haue hadde be a wylle:

(11.73-9.)

This is a curious combination of the two false charges made by the Matabryne of the French versions: the accusation of possession by dogs made before the king, and the suggestion of multiple intercourse made to Betryce herself. This confusion can scarcely have existed in the original: the latter charge was probably recalled to the redactor,--who had omitted it in its proper place earlier in the story (vide supra, (: H.115-40; R.79-91.))--by the occurrence of the former in his source, in the same form and at much the same point as in R. His attempt to combine the two makes nonsense of both, and suggests either extreme carelessness or failure to appreciate the full significance of the dual accusation. As a result, his Matabryne, though equally evil, is a much less subtle character than her counterpart in the original, whose scheming duplicity is made fully apparent. This initial confusion has unfortunate repercussions throughout the redaction. And there are other instances where association of ideas has caused the redactor to combine passages from widely separated points in his source. Here, for example, Betryce, on her way to prison, prays:-

"Dame sainte Marie, con dolerous torment!
Glorieuse pucele, secour me isnelement. (H: 11.263-4.)

The English poet, combining or confusing this with a later prayer by the queen (which he omits in its proper place):-

Et la dame s'escrie: "Aidiés, Diu, par vo non,
Qui aidastes Suzane du mauvais faux tesmon;
Aidiés me, biaux dous Sire, par vo saintime non! (H: 11.796-8.)

gives, in the context of the former, a version very similar to the latter-

And mony a fayre orysoun vn-to be fader made,
That saued Susanne fro sorowefulle domus, her to saue als.

(11.90-91.)

(92-104 : H.287-313;R.192-214.) A change of scene in the poetic versions of H and R is,as usual,marked by a narrative link:-

Or lairons de la dame qui'est a tort mesorede.
Si dirons des enfans qui dolours est creue,
Se Jesu Cris n'en pense que lor viene en aue. (H: 11.287-9.)

The English redactor generally ignores such summaries of past action, but occasionally,as in this instance,he makes use of the narrative link in returning to characters who have been absent from the action for some time. The story now returns to Markus who,finding himself unable to kill the children,leaves them in the wood. In condensing this episode the alliterative poet has concentrated upon the essential action rather than on the conflict of feeling in Markus. But he is not so preoccupied with the narrative as to ignore the human interest in the passage and makes one fine line of the way in which the murderer's heart is softened:-

And pey ley & low3e on hym,louelye alle at ones:
(1.98.)

The idea is not his own,but its expression represents an improvement upon the original.

(105-119 : H.314-80;R.215-57.) At this point the Naissance texts return briefly to Katabryne,whose servant reports that the children are dead, before continuing the story of how the seven are suckled by a hind until discovered by the hermit who cares for them till they are grown. The redactor wisely avoids this break in a straightforward narrative sequence,which carries the action over several years,and he leaves Markus' report to the reader's imagination. He also avoids the distraction of an aside by the French author,in which it is revealed that if the children lose their chains they will become swans. This does nothing to explain why or how the change takes place,and since such

Incidents were probably accepted uncritically and unquestioningly in literature of this sort, the English reader lost little or nothing by being unprepared for the transformation. For the rest, the redactor follows the general sequence of the French faithfully enough, striking a happy balance in his abbreviated version between narrative and descriptive detail, which is important here in giving a picture of the misery in which the children are left. At one point, by collecting scattered details and hints in his source, he gives a description which is fuller and more sustained than its counterpart in the versions under examination:-

But sone þe mantelle was vn-do with mengyng of her legges;
 They cryedde vp on-hyȝe with a dolefulle steuene,
 They cnyuered for colde as cheuerynge chyliden,
 They ȝoakened, & cryde out, & þat a man herde,
 An holy hermyte was by & towarde hem cometne:
 (11.105-9.)

Where he troubles to make a composite picture out of material scattered through the looser narrative of the original, his redaction has some value as a creation in its own right, but where he takes separate ideas from here and there in the French:-

La biche les alette et ly hermite proie
 Dame Dieu chascun jour que mette en droite voye
 Les enfans a nourrir, n'est nulz qui le meseroie. (R: 11.249-51.)

L'ermite leur fait robes de feuilles de loriers; (R: 1.257.);

and runs them together:-

Thus he noryscheth hem vp, & Criste hem helpe sendeth.
 Of sadde leues of þe wode wrowȝte he hem wedes.

he produces an unfortunate mixture of the generalisations which best suit his brief, rapidly-moving narrative and the particularised descriptions which abound in the more leisurely French.

(120-140 : H.381-448; R.258-308.) Some years having passed (though the

interval is not made clear either in the English or in the original texts), the forester Malkedras comes upon the children in the wood, informs his mistress Matabryne, and is sent to kill them, while Markus is blinded by the orders of the old queen. The redactor has altered the sequence of events: Matabryne interrupts the forester's story of his discovery to cross-question Markus and put out his eyes, before instructing Malkedras to return and kill the children. This alteration, which at first sight seems clumsy, is extremely effective in the abbreviated English narrative, giving immediate effect to the old queen's vengeance and allowing the sequence of events to continue unbroken thereafter, the forester's attack on the children following immediately upon the orders given to him. This suggests a deliberate attempt to manipulate the material of the Naissance in suiting it to an abbreviated form. The process of abbreviation in this instance is oddly erratic: the narrative is greatly reduced and some important details, such as the relation between Matabryne and Malkedras, are omitted altogether, while the interrogation of Markus is expanded, a single line in the poetic texts:-

Markes tute li a la verité contée. (H: 1.440.),

becoming:-

Whenne she hym asked hadde, he seyde, "here be sothe;
 Dame, on a ryueres banke, lapped in my mantelle,
 I lafte hem lyynge there, leue pou for sothe:
 I myȝte not drowne nem for dole, do what þe lykess."
 (11.131-4.)

This repetition of something to which the redactor had already given as much space as was consistent with its importance in the narrative seems completely unnecessary. It contrasts oddly with the skilful way in which he abbreviates the lengthy dialogue between Matabryne and Malkedras, keeping to direct narration until he reaches the significant detail, which he leaves in the form of the original:-

He turnede aȝeyn to þe courte & tolde of þe chaunce,
And menede byfore ~~Matabryne~~ Matabryne how many þer were.
"And more merueyle þenne þat,dame,a seluere cheyne
Eche on of hem hath abowte here awyre" (11.123-6.)

This sort of inconsistency in abbreviation is responsible for the very uneven nature of the redaction as a whole.

(141-152 : B.449-82;R.309-334.) As a result of the rearrangement in the previous section the redactor passes directly to the attack upon the children. Finding only six of them Malkedras cuts off their chains, they become swans and fly away,while he returns with the chains to Matabryne. At this crucial point the English author has followed his source closely,—so far as one can judge from the available texts—, retaining everything which is essential to the narrative. Here,as so often,his version is shorter than even the less prolix of the two poetic texts in French,but his abbreviation is achieved by economy of expression and he eliminates only the author's pious asides:-

Or gard Dieu les enfans et sa vertu nommee;
Quer leur joye sera jusqu'a pou moult mree. (R: 11.311-12.)

In other respects his version is so similar to both these texts,—but to R in particular,—as to suggest that he was following a poetic form of the original rather than one in French or Latin prose. For example:-

Il a traiote l'espee,dont lo poem fut dorez,
Les vi enfans en a si fort espouentez;
Les chaînes leur osta les ouvers desfaëz,
Et ils batent leurs esles,trestous s'en sont volez.
Or sont tous six oyseaulx,si com dire me oëz, (R: 11.317-21.),

appears as:-

And he out withe his swerde & smote of þe cheynes.
They stoden alle styлле,for stere þey ne durste;
And whenne þe cheynes felle hem fro þey flowen vp swannes,
(11.140-3.)

This is as close as the alliterative poet ever comes to literal translation,and his faithfulness to the original is probably due to

the fact that here, for once, the French narrative advances rapidly and comparatively unhindered by description or comment. He omits only one element of significance,—the sorrow of the seventh child when he finds his brothers and sisters gone,—presumably in order to avoid breaking the narrative sequence, which, in the English version, continues the history of the silver chains from the point where they are handed to Matabryne.

⌈ : H.483-557;) At this point the H text contains a lengthy section describing how the surviving child went each day to the palace of Oriens to receive the alms distributed to the poor and saw the six swans swimming in the royal vivier. Without recognising them he feels drawn to the swans and feeds them daily. The poet explains their identity, and takes the opportunity to recapitulate the story up to this point. There is nothing of this in the English work, and as it is not found in R, L, or T it was presumably lacking in the version used by the redactor.⁷

(153-178 : H.558-89; R.335-62.) Consequently, the redactor completes, without interruption, the story of the chains which Matabryne gives to a goldsmith, ordering him to make her a cup from them. Finding one chain more than sufficient for the purpose, he is advised by his wife to keep the other for himself. The English work gives a curious version of the original, abbreviating the two scenes in which the goldsmith receives the chains from the old queen and delivers the cup to her in much the usual manner, but expanding the remainder of the section in a novel way. The redactor describes the making of the cup at equal length with the French, and follows this with a conversation between the jeweller and his wife,—in bed (a human touch for which there is no

warrant in the original texts examined here)—, discussing what has happened in the forging of the silver and what is to be done with the remaining chains. There is no new material of any significance, but some narrative duplication (11.165-8 virtually repeat 11.157-60) and a general prolixity which is very unusual in a redaction where extreme abbreviation is the general rule. The result is a passage little shorter than the French poetic versions. It is difficult to see what special significance the alliterative poet can have seen in this particular incident: others of greater importance to the plot are much more summarily treated.

(179-190 : H.590-618, R.363-85.) Confident that she now has evidence of the childrens' death, Matabryne renews her efforts to have Betryce put to death and the king at last, unwillingly, consents. The passage in which the old queen plots the next development in her scheme provides one of the rare instances in which the English is close enough to the French poetic texts to suggest that it derived from a version of the type represented by H and R. The R version reads:-

"Bien suis de ceulz delivré, alos sont voirement.
 Se leur mere estoit arse ne me chauldroit neant;
 Je la feray ardoir, certes, prouchainement,
 Puis est miens la terre, a mon commandement. (R: 11.364-7.),

and H has only slight verbal differences. Neither of the two prose texts has anything comparable, and it seems likely that the alliterative lines represent a more or less literal translation from the source:-

They be deliyuered out of pis worlde; were þe moder eke,
 Thenne hadde I pis londe noliye to myne wylle;
 Now alle wyles analle fayle but I here dethe werke."
 (11.180-82.)

Whatever the nature of that source it is unlikely that the redactor maintained this sort of translation for more than a few lines at a time. Here, and in the slightly abbreviated version of Matabryne's speech to

her son, he is presenting matter on which the future action depends, and acknowledges its importance by giving a relatively full and coherent version.

(191-206 : H.619-83; R.386-431.) His treatment of what follows is much more superficial. The night before the burning of the queen an angel comes to the hermit, reveals everything, and orders him to send the child to defend his mother. Much of the lengthy passage in the Raisance is taken up with the angel's recapitulation of the action to this point. It is not the first reduplication in the French narrative, and what might well have been spared there would be entirely out of place in the abbreviated form of the English redaction. The few lines to which the poet has reduced it are in keeping with the general scale of his work, but unfortunately he has selected the wrong details for inclusion: his version tells where the missing children are and who deprived them of their chains, (points which have little bearing on the fate of Betryce and which, oddly enough, are not contained in the French texts at this point), and ignores the essential warning of the queen's imminent execution. Even where compression was less essential, in the commands given to the hermit:-

Par moy te mande Die, comme a son chevalier dru,
Que l'enfant que tu as o toy xi ans tenu
Convient demain sa mere defendre au branc moulu,
A escu et aux armes et a cheval charnu"
"Hee! Dieu! dist li hermite, "que est ce que die tu?
Il ne vit oncques armes, ne lance, ne escu;
Certes s'il se combat le cuide avoir perdu! (R: 11.417-23.)

he has translated,--apparently from a text similar to R--, in such an incoherent way that, though the general sense is clear, individual lines cannot be understood without knowledge of the original:-

And Criste nath formeth þis chylde to fyȝte for his moder."
"Oo-lyuyngē God þat dwellest in heuene", quod þe hermyte þanne,
How sholde he serue for suche a þyngē, þat neuur none syȝe?"
(11.200-202.)

But the difficulty of judging the nature of the redaction precisely, here or elsewhere, is illustrated by one detail of the charge given to the hermit: the command that the child is to be christened Enyas. At first sight this looks like an original addition by the redactor, since it is not in the poetic versions of the Naissance or in the Latin prose, and it is difficult to understand why he should add anything while eliminating even the essentials of the narrative. But the inclusion of this detail in T (vide supra, p. 177) suggests that it was also in the redactor's source, the individual peculiarities of which may be responsible for much that seems original in the alliterative poem. (207-218 : H. 684-756; R. 432-77.) The passage which follows presents the same sort of difficulty. The H text has thirteen lines in which the hermit worries and prays over the problem of how the child is to fight in armed combat, while the R version gives only the essential idea of his perplexity:-

Lors s'en ala li ange et commence a chanter;
 Li hermite remaint, qui fut en grant penser.
 L'ermite demoura et l'ange s'en ala.
 Onques puis le preudome de penser ne fina. (R: 11.431-4.)

The English poet, in his version:-

The nere myte wakyng lay & thowȝte on his wordes:
 (1.207.)
 was presumably translating something similar to the latter rather than giving a summary from a text of the H type. Conversely, his redaction has nothing, however brief, to correspond to the next incident in the story, when the hermit wakes the child:-

"Ou irons nous, biaux pere? ne me l'devez celer.
 Irons en la forest pour nos cors deporter?
 Je sais de bonnes poires pour manger au disner;
 C'est le miudres mangier que on puist recovrer" (H: 11.700-703.)

It is impossible to tell whether this charming passage was lacking in his original, or whether he rejected it. He has not rejected other

material of the same sort, designed to show the innocence and naivety of the child, who, when told that he must fight to defend his mother, asks:-

"Sire? fait-il, "N'est mere, et s'on la mangera?
Sont ce oisel u bestes, ne me celer vous ja" (H: 11.722-3.)

But the English version, less detailed than H, L, or R, presumably represents an abbreviation of the source. The effect of the original is, however, quite well conveyed, though there is the usual lack of proportion, and the balance between general narrative and illustrative incident is not well maintained. For example, in avoiding yet another summary of past action, given by the hermit in H and R, he leaves the child in ignorance of his past history and why he must fight for his mother, thus weakening the motivation of what follows. Yet, so far as one can judge, the redaction is reasonably competent and faithful to the original.

(219-230 : H.757-886; R.478-576.) What follows represents a very different approach to the process of adaptation. A lengthy section of the French text,--which even in R occupies some hundred lines--, describes the child's departure, his wild appearance with shaggy hair and coat of leaves, his wander as the forest, his home from birth, is left behind:-

"Mes or me dietes, pere, ou est le bois aiez?"
"Beau filz? dist li hermite, "laissez vos foleitez;
Il est ou il souloit, a Dieu vous en aiez" (R: 11.497-9.),

and his parting from the hermit. The narrative then switches to the court, where Betryse is being dragged from prison to the stake when the child arrives and is amazed by the sight of Oriens riding on horseback:-

"Belle beste est cheval? fait cil, "se Dieu m'anant;
Et mengue le fer qui ainsi va marchant?
"Beau frere, c'est son frain? fait le roy maintenant.
(R: 11.566-8.)

From all this the redactor has selected only a few incidents, and, by rearranging and combining them in a new sequence, has provided a narrative link which represents an extreme abbreviation of the original, carrying on the action with the minimum of fundamental and descriptive detail. The passage is well conceived, following Enyas' journey from the forest until he meets the court procession, and so maintaining the continuity essential to such a slight, swift-moving narrative. But it omits much human detail, which, in the *Reissence*, gives an air of credibility to the somewhat improbable legend, while incongruously retaining a minor detail which is not essential for the future action:-

Whenne þe heremyte nym lafte an angelle nym suwethe,
Eaur to rede þe cnylde vpon his ryȝte sholder.

(11.221-2.)

In spite of its inconsistency this extreme condensation is interesting as evidence of an attempt by the redactor to control his source matter, not by slavishly translating one line in every three or four, but by describing a whole scene in a few verses to which there is no direct counterpart in the original:-

Thenne he seeth in a felde folke gaderynge faate,
And a nyȝt fyre was þer bette þat þe qwere anolde in brenne,

(11.223-4.)

and replacing a specific incident:-

Mauquarré sonne ung cor a moult grant alencee,
Et Matebrune a une trompe sonnee, (R: 11.529-30.)

by a generalised description:-

And noyse was in þe cyte felly lowde,
With trumpes & tabers, whenne þey here vp token;
(11.225-6.)

(231-264 : H.887-982; R.577-645.) Having covered this section, in which there is relatively little development of the plot, by a brief narrative link, the redactor deals less drastically with the important scene which follows. Enyas questions the king as to the charges against

Betryce, declares that he will prove them false, is attacked by Matabryne, and agrees to fight her champion Malkedras. Although the general outline of the scene remains very much as in the Naissance, there is some divergence in minor matters which seems deliberately designed to concentrate the narrative and heighten its effect. For example, the redactor has apparently introduced a direct charge by Enyas that Matabryne is deceiving the king with false accusations against the queen (11.238-41) and replaced a section of vituperation on Matabryne's part with a specific challenge to Enyas to meet her champion in the field. (11.260-61). This, together with the retention of an apparently superfluous incident,--the old queen's assault upon the child--, focusses attention upon the conflict between Matabryne and Enyas, and it may well have been the redactor's intention to simplify the issue by bringing the protagonist of evil:--

For she is fowle felle & fals, & so she shalle be fownden,
And bylefte with þe fend at here laste ende,
(11.239-40.)

into direct conflict with the champion of good who has divine guidance and protection. The central issue stands out all the more clearly for the removal of a great deal in the original, such as the expressions of sympathy and support for Enyas amongst the courtiers present, which has only incidental importance. This concentration and simplification, whether or not it is deliberately contrived, is much more in keeping with the abbreviated form of the alliterative poem than the confused and diffuse wrangling of the French texts.

Λ : H.983-1103; R.646-92.) The complete omission of what follows adds to this effect. At this point in the four Naissance texts examined Matabryne encourages her champion Malkedras, makes him a knight (a detail not found in T), and sees to his arming for the combat. Though it seems

likely that something of the sort must have appeared in his source, the redactor has wisely omitted it, since all attention from this point must be concentrated on Enyas as the champion of Right. He has also omitted Oriens' promise of arms for Enyas, since the actual arming of the child will occupy him in due course, at a more appropriate point in the action (265-274 : H.1104-75; R.693-719.) Unfortunately the omission has been carried too far. The English author, perhaps in reading rapidly through a passage which he saw to be unimportant for his purpose, failed to notice a few lines in which Enyas asks to be baptised according to the angel's command, carefully included by the redactor at the point where it was given (11.203-4). As a result the ceremony occurs at once, without introduction, and follows rather awkwardly upon the quarrel with Matabryne. It is difficult to see what significance the redactor attached to this incident, which he translates with unusual fullness. True, it contributes to the moral theme of the story, stressing the fact that Enyas is to fight as the Christian champion of Right against Malkedras, who is conceived as the instrument of evil. But this aspect of the episode is ignored in favour of the material circumstances of the ceremony, which the redactor describes in unnecessary detail. Divine approval of the baptism is manifested:-

Et les cloches par elles commencent a sonner,
Se fut signifiante de joye au commencer. (R: 11.695-6.)

But the alliterative poet, either misunderstanding the reference or trying to extend its significance to the judicial combat which follows, gives an altered version not altogether suited to its context:-

Alle þe bellys of þe close rongen at ones
Witne-oute ony mannes helpe while þe fyȝte lasted;
(11.272-3.)

(275-282 : H.1176-1241; R.720-56.) But the redactor has not altogether

failed to appreciate the importance of the preliminaries to the combat. Although he omitted the Naissance description of the knight-
ing and arming of Malkedras, he has here retained a scene in which Enyas is made a knight and provided with horse and armour by his father, Oriens. It serves not only to concentrate attention upon the hero as the climax of the story approaches, but also to suggest, in certain details of the arms, the supernatural protection under which he is to fight. And the English author has been careful to include the one feature which makes this supernatural association evident: the shield with the inscription "pat to Enyas hit sholde";—a detail which is found only in L amongst the texts examined (vide supra, pp. 170-1) but which was, presumably, in the original of the alliterative version. The use which he has made of this suggests that the redactor had an eye for significant detail. He has selected it from the mass of descriptive matter contained in this passage: the report of the way in which the shield was discovered by the servants sent to fetch arms, the description of the arms themselves, of the ceremony of knighthood, etc., of none of which he makes any use. In an abbreviation containing only the bare bones of the narrative he mentions only those features material to the action which follows: the horse Forauce which plays a vital role in the battle, and the shield which ultimately brings about the downfall of Malkedras. Clearly, his interest lies in action rather than in description, but in this instance at least he has been careful not to weaken later sections of his narrative by eliminating essential details along with the merely incidental.

[(: H.1242-1308; R.757-75.) The Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, particularly in its poetic version, must have proved extremely irritating to a redactor chiefly interested in a story of action and incident.

At this point, for example, both H and R repeat at some length details of the arming of Enyas already given, and follow this with a scene in which Matabryne exhorts her champion to kill the child, very similar to an earlier passage (vide supra (: H.983-1103; R.646-92.)), omitted in the English text. The redactor has also omitted it on this occasion, -together with the reduplicated references to Enyas' arms-, and presumably for the same reasons as before: it adds nothing essential to the story, diverts attention from the hero, and breaks the narrative sequence at a point where the crisis is rapidly approaching⁷ (283-313 : H.1309-1379; R.776-829.) The long passage which follows is open to the same objection, since it too postpones the crisis of the story and does little to advance the action. But the redactor was clearly aware that it plays a vital role in the narrative, and has treated it accordingly. Having concentrated the reader's attention upon the youthful hero in the preparations for the duel, the English author follows the original in demonstrating his complete incapacity in combat, and in suggesting the impossibility of his defeating Malkedras and rescuing his mother. Enyas is a hero of a familiar Medieval type: the boy of noble birth brought up in the forest far from court, naturally strong, but ignorant of chivalric practice and untrained in combat. The invariable success of such heroes in joust or battle depends partly upon innate knightly qualities and partly, as in this case, upon divine assistance, given to the pure in heart for a just purpose. The simplicity and innocence of Enyas and his ignorance of everything to do with armed combat is demonstrated in this passage by the naivety of his questions about every article of his equipment as a knight. This is an extension of the method already used to show how impossible

it is that Enyas should fulfil the angel's command, his childish simplicity being suggested by his questions, "what is a horse?", "what is a mother?", etc. In fact, his first question to the knight appointed to instruct him in the use of arms is a repetition of his query about the horse, which has already occurred twice in the French poetic texts. On its second occurrence, at the point where Enyas meets Oriens riding to the execution of his queen, the redactor omitted the incident entirely [vide supra (219-230 : H.757-886; H.478-576.)). But it apparently remained in his memory, for when the child now asks again:-

"Qu'est ce sur quoy je suis, comment ne peut porter?"
(R: 1.788.),

he adds another question about the horse's bit:-

"Why etethe he yren?" quod þe chylde, "wylle he ete
noȝ the elles?
(1.290.)

which, in the original version, appears in the second of the three passages. Triple use of the same incident is certainly too much, and the redactor was wise to avoid one of the repetitions, but his eye for detail has led him to preserve an effective touch for use, in combination with similar material, at the point where its contribution to the narrative is most essential. This threefold repetition illustrates the tendency of the original author to over-write effective material, stressing the hero's simplicity to the point where it becomes ludicrous, by putting into his mouth a long string of questions in which he naïvely tries to describe the armour about which he is enquiring. The English poet has abbreviated each of these to a single verse, making effective use of adjectives bearing the alliteration of the line, to show Enyas' ignorance of the terms for arms and armour:-

"And what heuy kyrtelle is þis, withe holes so thykke?
And þis holowe on on my hede, I may noȝt wele here."
"An helme men kallen þat on, & an nawberke þat other"

208

But what broode on is pis on my breste, hit bereth
 adown my nekke"
 "A bryȝte shelde & a sheene, to anylde þe fro strokes"
 "And what longe on is pis, that I analle vp lyfte?"
 "Take þat launce vp in þyn honde & loxe þou hymhytte;
 (11.294-300.)

And so he makes a natural transition to further questions on how the arms are to be used in battle, of which he gives a slightly fuller translation. The whole is much more concise than the original, but the effect of the French text is well conveyed in a passage which has a certain poetic force and vigour lacking elsewhere in the alliterative poem:--

And Penne plukke out þy swerde & pele on hym faste,
 Alle-vey eggelynges down on alle þat þou fyndes;
 His ryche helm nor his swerde rekke þou of neypur;
 Lete þe sharpe of þy swerde schreden hym analle"
 (11.304-7.)

[: H.1380-1430; H.1119-62.) The redactor evidently considered that his treatment of this section was adequate to establish the simplicity and ignorance of Enyas. He has therefore omitted a passage in which the hero shatters a lance against a wall in trying it, since it has much the same purpose as the preceding one. Nothing of importance is lost by the omission, though he has also excluded a few lines in which the knight warns Enyas not to let Walkedras strike the cross on his shield. As a result, Enyas, in the English version, has no apparent authority for the warning, when he repeats it to his opponent during the fight. But the warning as it comes from the knight is equally cryptic and unexplained, and the redactor, by avoiding an unnecessary repetition, has postponed it to the point where it is material to the action.]

(314-332 : H.1431-1533; R.863-909.) As a result, he is able to pass at once to the combat between Enyas and Walkedras. The description of

the duel is much more detailed in H than in R, and the English version follows the latter in ~~concentrating~~ upon the two incidents which suggest supernatural ~~intervention~~ on behalf of the hero. Divine assistance is more directly implied by the French text, which introduces the scene where Feraunce blinds the other horse with:-

Or orrés le miracle moult merveilleux et grant: (R: 1.870.)

But the alliterative author has given it equal importance in his poem, though without attempting to explain it. His version of the second incident, in which ~~Malmedras~~, despite the warning given him, strikes the hero's shield and is blinded as a result, is highly individual and bears only the loosest relation to the original. In both the poetic texts and in the Latin prose (the abbreviated version of T dismisses the battle in a single sentence) this incident is duplicated at two widely separated points in the narrative. On the first occasion, when Walkedras strikes the shield:-

.....Dieu qui a pouair sur la crestianné,
Fist de la croix yssir ung feu tout alumé,
Enmy le vis parvint le cuvert parjuré, (R: 11.905-7.);

but he recovers and, after a long struggle, strikes a second time:-

Par la force de Dieu, qui n'ayme se bien non,
Fait de la croix saillir, sans point d'arrestoison,
Ung serpent a deux testes, oncques tel ne vit hom. (R: 11.960-2)

Tout droit a Mauquarré a la veüe se lance;
Les deux testes lui crevent les deux yeulx sans doubtañce.
(R: 11.968-9)

The English redactor has combined these two attacks into one, and made both the manifestations occur simultaneously:-

An edder spronge out of his shelde & in his body spynnethe;
A fyre fruscneth out of his croys & frapte out his yen:
(11.331-2.)

He apparently missed the significance of the two-headed snake and he has reversed the order of the apparitions, but by telescoping them he

has avoided another instance of duplication which, though it was apparently to the French taste, would have been irritating in the close sequence of an abbreviated version. Though he might have been wiser to choose between the two manifestations, the redactor's interest in action has made him retain both, while ignoring their dual context.

(*Λ* : H.1534-1670; R.910-70.) But clearly he was not interested in action for its own sake, only in so far as it advanced the plot of his story. In the original version the two attacks upon Enyas' shield are separated by a lengthy passage giving further details of the struggle, in which the hero is often hard-pressed, while Betryce prays for him and Katabryne huris threats. The description of the combat is often lively and interesting:-

Lors s'en viennent ensemble pié a pié;
 Mauquarré fiert l'enfant ou heaume gemé,
 Les pierre et les fleurs ont a sus trebuché,
 Se Dieu ne le gardast, ja l'eüst enginé;
 Le serf a tout son heaume despecié. (R: 11.915-19.)

But it tends to be repetitive, - particularly in the very full version of H-, and it delays the inevitable victory of Enyas. By omitting the passage the redactor has made the victory a matter of divine intervention rather than of personal skill on the part of Enyas, but he had probably no deliberate intention of altering the significance of the original, and merely wished to reach the climax of the action as rapidly and directly as possible.]

(333-345 : H.1671-1702; R.971-97.) As the end of the story approaches his treatment of the original becomes more and more summary, and he freely omits, transposes and rearranges the content to suit his purpose. The sequence of events in the French texts is awkward and unimaginative. Enyas strikes down Malkedras and is about to kill him when Katabryne

flees from the battle-field, and only after describing her flight does the author return to the execution of her defeated champion. The redactor, with his usual care to avoid rapid changes of scene and subject, continues the combat up to the point where the hero cuts off his opponent's head, before describing the escape of the old queen. In the abbreviated form of the alliterative poem the new sequence is an improvement upon the original. The English poet was, in any case, debarred from treating the escape of Matabryne as incidental to the last moments of the battle by a fundamental alteration which he has introduced at this point. In all four of the original texts examined the old queen takes refuge in her castle of Malbruiant, where, later in the story, she is besieged by Enyas, captured after a long campaign, and put to death. This siege is the first adventure of the swan-knight after his restoration to his parents, when he has succeeded Oriens as king, and it serves, therefore, as a link between the Naissance and the Chevalier au Cygne proper. To the redactor, who had apparently decided not to translate the later adventures of the swan-knight, this link could only be an embarrassment. To avoid the difficulty he allows Enyas to overtake Matabryne in her flight, bring her back, and have her burnt on the spot, so breaking the link, tidying up the loose ends of the narrative, and giving his readers the satisfaction of seeing justice done at once. This is certainly a more satisfactory ending than any attempt to summarise the siege of Malbruiant could have been.

⌈ (H.1703-20; R.998-1010.) In direct contrast to this attempt to control his source material in giving a version more suited to the audience for whom he catered, the redactor, by omitting a short passage at this point, leaves an important strand in the story unfinished.

In the original *Enyas* now asks for Markus, reveals his part in saving the children, and, by a miracle, his sight is restored. The alliterative poet may have wished to avoid the distraction of re-introducing a character so long absent from the action, but his failure to see justice done to Markus weakens the conventional happy ending of the story and spoils its neatness.]

(346-70 : H. 1721-1867; R. 1011-65.) The remaining threads of the narrative are rapidly tied-off. The redactor is not at any pains to contrive a conclusion of his own: as the *Naissance* forms a major episode in the Crusade Cycle, once independent from it and virtually complete in itself, he is content, apart from the alteration he has already made, to follow the general outline of the French narrative to the end of the incident. His version is, as always, an abbreviation of the original, - in so far as it is represented by the four texts examined -, one in which the degree of abbreviation varies from passage to passage. In the French texts *Enyas* recounts at length the whole action of the story for the benefit of his readers, and the English author, in attempting to summarise this in a few lines produces a rather incoherent account:-

The childe kome byfore þe kyng & on-hyȝe he seyde,
 And tolde hym how he was his sone, "& oþur sex children,
 By þe quene Betryce, she bare hem at ones,
 For a worde on þe walle, þat she wronge seyde;
 And ȝonder in a ryuere swimmen þey swannes;
 Sythen þe forsworne thefe Malkadras byrafte hem her
 cherynes."

(ll. 346-51.)

He might have been better advised to avoid the unnecessary recapitulation of the French versions, as he has done elsewhere. He gives a less condensed and more comprehensible version of the practical steps by which the remaining chains are dissevered, five of the swans restored to human form and baptised, only omitting descriptive details of the ceremony, the

clothing of the children, etc., after his usual fashion. Having followed his source to the conclusion of its first major episode, he rounds off his redaction by echoing the vague reference to divine protection with which he began:-

And þus þe botenyng of God browȝte hem to honde;
(1.370.)
but without attempting to draw any moral lesson from the story he has just told.

The conclusive note on which the poem ends makes it obvious that the redactor's plan was complete at this point, and that he deliberately rejected what followed in his source. With the siege of Malbruant, the capture and death of Matabryne, the Naissance gives place to the Chevalier au Cygne without any formal division between the two sequences. On the instructions of an angel Enyas goes to the river, where he finds his swan-~~boat~~ pulling a boat in which he sets off upon further adventures. After an incident closely paralleling the siege of Malbruant, in which he kills a brother of Matabryne, the swan-knight rescues the lands of the widowed duchess of Bouillon from the attacks of Rainer, duke of Salines, and marries her daughter, exacting a promise that his wife will never ask his name or origin. There follows a series of battles in which Enyas overcomes the various enemies of the duchy. Then, after the birth of a daughter, the young duchess breaks her promise, and at once the swan-boat appears and carries away her husband for ever, leaving her alone with the child who, an angel has foretold, will be the mother of Godfrey of Bouillon and his two famous brothers. This much at least of the Crusade Cycle was most probably included in the English poet's source. Whether or not his manuscript contained the later branches dealing with the birth of Godfrey, his

early life and triumph in the crusade, as well as the great mass of adventures loosely connected with his career, it is impossible to tell. If it did, then presumably the redactor was not interested in the historical assumptions of the cycle, or in the claim of a French national hero to be descended from the legendary swan-knight. Strangely enough, this claim, in another form, was responsible for the only other Middle English version of the Geste du Chevalier au Cygne which has survived. In the early years of the Sixteenth century, Robert Copland translated into English the prose version of Pierre Desreys (vide supra, p. 168), "at thynstynacyon of the puyssaunt and illustrious Prynce lorde Edwarde Duke of Buckyngham" who also claimed descent from the swan-knight. (1)

Between the earlier and the later sections of the Crusade Cycle there is a distinction, both in content and in treatment, which may explain the English redactor's preference for the Naissance and his neglect of the other episodes. The military career of Godfrey de Bouillon, described in a semi-historical record of battles and sieges with the epic tone of the chansons de geste, may have seemed less likely to please the particular English audience for which he was working than the highly-coloured and melodramatic story of the swan-knight, with its element of the supernatural. In preferring romantic adventure to historical epic he was at one with most of the foreign redactors,

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- 1) This version survives in a single copy, printed by Wynkin de Worde at London in 1512, and in another unique copy of the edition by Copland's son William (London, 1550?). See R. Jaffray, op. cit., p. 71. A facsimile of the former was issued by the Grolier Club of New York in 1901, and the latter was reprinted by W. J. Thoms, in A Collection of Early Prose Romances, Vol. III, London, 1828. See C. P. Farrar and A. P. Evans, Bibliography of English Translations from Medieval Sources (Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies, No. XXXIX), New York, 1946, p. III. Caxton's translation, Godfrey of Boloyne or The Last Siege of Jerusalem, printed 1481, was based on the history of William of Tyre (vide supra, p. 160 Note 3) and is, therefore, distinct from the Crusade Cycle.

(1)

who made use of the Crusade Cycle for their own purposes. Naturally enough, the contrast between the original epic and the later additions to it is not absolute. The material of the Naissance is not un-mixed: the fantastic folk-story is set in the court world of the romance and chivalric combat plays a vital part in the plot, but its outcome is divinely predestined and throughout there are religious overtones to the action. The French author evidently found nothing unsuitable in mingling supernatural elements, mysterious transformations and angelic apparitions, of diverse and conflicting origins. The English redactor, equally unconscious of any incongruity, has accepted the mixture very much as he found it, without attempting to select certain elements to the neglect of others or to concentrate on any particular aspect of the story. The opening lines of his version suggest an attempt to present the tale as an illustration of a general Christian dictum, but, though the plot presents him with numerous opportunities to moralise on divine protection of the weak and innocent, there is no other evidence of the same sort and no general effort to give the story moral significance. Indeed, where the original presents another, though more limited, moral (19-32 : R.50-72; R.25-46.), the redactor has omitted it. The English poet cannot, therefore, be viewed as a didactic author, more interested in the moral than the narrative aspects of his source. And, although

(Cont.) See Wells, Manual, p.98; G.P.Farrar and A.P.Evans, op.cit., p.217.

- 1) "...à l'époque où l'imitation étrangère commence à s'emparer de notre poésie, les branches historiques du cycle de la croisade ont déjà perdu une partie de leur popularité. C'était le temps où les romans de la Table-ronde et ceux du Saint-Grail gardaient encore tout l'éclat de la nouveauté.... La Chanson d'Antioche et celle de Jérusalem paraissaient trop romanesques pour une histoire et trop historiques pour un roman. Aussi les traducteurs et les imitateurs étrangers s'attachèrent-ils de préférence à reproduire les

he largely ignores the courtly background to the action, and shows some impatience with the chivalric incidents in the original(: H.1534-1670;R.510-70.), while dwelling conspicuously on some practical details of the plot(153-173 : H.558-59;R.135-62.), he displays no consistent preference for any particular topic and the balance of elements in the French text is not significantly altered.

But, although the redactor shows no general bias in presenting the material of the Naissance and no apparent intention of re-interpreting it fundamentally, he is somewhat more independent in his treatment of the narrative. Far from following either the sequence or the proportion of the original he appears to have concentrated upon the essential action, upon the narrative which advances the plot, rather than the descriptive details which make up a considerable part of the French text. Where he makes omissions it is the incidental matter, the ceremonies, - of thanksgiving(: H.88-94;R.53-61.), and of knighthood(: H.983-1103;R.646-92.) -, descriptions of arming(: H.1242-1308;R.757-75.), and of the preliminaries to battle(: H.1388-1438;R.530-62.), which disappear. And where he abbreviates his source, reducing lengthy passages in the French to a few lines in his version, it is generally the narrative of action which survives at the expense of the descriptive and emotional elements, indications of the setting in which the story moves and the feelings by which the characters are motivated. For example, in condensing the narrative of Enyas' arrival at court(219-230 : H.757-886;R.478-576.), he has ignored the hero's wild appearance and the reactions of the courtiers, while in

(Cont.)merveilleuses aventures du Chevalier au Cygne, qui pourraient lutter sans trop de désavantage contre les fictions des trouvères bretons? (H. Pigeonneau, op.cit., pp.237-8.)

describing the ~~knighting~~ of Enyas(275-282 : H.1176-1241;R.720-56.)he has omitted the physical details of the equipment and ceremonial involved. And similarly,in narrating the ~~transformation~~ of the children (141-152 : H.449-82;R.309-34.),he has not described the sorrow of the surviving boy on finding the others gone,just as,earlier(92-104 : H.287-313;R.192-214.),he concentrated upon the action of Markus in sparing their lives rather than upon the conflict of feeling in which his decision is reached. So,at the birth of the children,he concentrated upon the ~~machinations~~ of Matabryne rather than upon her character and motives as elaborated in the original. Here,as elsewhere,he is action rather than description or analysis of feeling with which he is primarily concerned.

But though the ~~reducer~~ follows his source most closely (1) where the original narrative is most spare and direct,there are some indications that he was not interested in incident and action for their own sake,but only in so far as they contribute to the essential plot of his story. From the scenes of combat he retains the incidents of supernatural ~~intercession~~ and largely ignores the lively narrative of the struggle between the two champions(: H.1554-1570;R.910-70.) interesting in itself but irrelevant to the development of the plot. And he is not so ~~exclusively~~ concerned with action as to overlook the part sometimes played by descriptive detail in preparing for developments in the plot or in illustrating some aspect of the story which cannot be otherwise conveyed. For example,his abbreviated version of the arming of Enyas(275-282 : H.1176-1241;R.720-56.)retains sufficient

1) See,for example,(141-152 : H.449-82;R.309-34.) and (179-190 : H.590-618;R.363-85.).

detail of the equipment involved and its mysterious origin to suggest the importance of the hero's role in the coming combat and to hint at the divine protection under which he is to fight. Similarly, his retention,--in part--, of the naïve questions which demonstrate the hero's ignorance of the use of arms, shows that the redactor realised the importance of such a passage in preparing for the miraculous victory against all odds, and increasing the surprise of Betryce's escape, by making both seem highly improbable beforehand. So, though the nature of his redaction has forced the English author to concern himself mainly with the narration of action, he is aware of the artistic value of the descriptive element in his source, and where he strikes a happy balance between action and description,--as, for example, in (109-119 : H. 114-85; H. 215-57.)--, he gives an account of his original which has much of its interest and variety without its tiresome loquacity.

Clearly, then, it was not the redactor's intention to present the Naissance in a form comparable to the French prose text of B.N. 781, (T), a bare précis of the plot devoid of human interest and descriptive detail. But there is every indication that his version represents an abbreviation of the original. Any judgement on the degree to which he has condensed his source must depend upon the nature of the text available to him, but even the shorter of the two poetic versions, Royal 15 B. vi, (R), with its 1065 lines, is almost three times longer than Chevaliers Assigne. One thing at least is clear: the English poem was not abbreviated by the method which apparently produced R from some version akin to H,--by the constant omission of single lines and groups of lines, reducing the expression without altering the sequence or affecting the conduct of the narrative within the poem. So far as it is possible to

judge, the English author conducted the technical side of his redaction with a freedom and originality which suggest an independent approach to his material, and some practical ability in narrative compression.

His independence is most obvious in those instances where he alters the sequence of the French text, displacing passages from their original context in order to fit them more effectively into his abbreviated version. Where, by this means, he achieves continuity in the main action of the story, upon which the reader's attention is concentrated, either by relegating subsidiary scenes to a less awkward position (120-140 : H.381-442; R.258-308.), or by omitting them as irrelevant (105-119 : H.314-80; R.215-57.), he shows that he realised clearly the distinction between the conduct of a narrative on the scale of the Naissance and his own, more limited, design. These attempts to compensate for his drastic abbreviation by avoiding rapid changes of scene and frequent interruptions of narrative sequence are significant: they suggest some sense of artistic purpose, a desire, at least, to do the work of a redactor conscientiously. But they are extremely limited and not always well conceived or executed: in one instance, at least, (57-74 : H.196-248; R.127-68.), the result is an additional confusion and disruption in the sequence of events, suggesting unthinking alteration rather than the conscious purpose which is evident elsewhere.

The occasional omission of whole episodes from the English poem suggests something of the same confusion of purpose. Much of the matter in the Naissance is incidental to the story proper, and the omission of ceremonials, -(: H.88-94; R.53-61.) and (: H.983-1103; R.645-692.)-, which contribute nothing to the story, and of passages duplicating material already sufficiently stressed, -(:

H.1242-1308;R.757-775.) and (: H.1385-1400;R.111-152.)—, was an obvious method of abbreviating it without in any way weakening the effect of the basic narrative. But other omissions were less well judged. Removal of the crucial scene in which Matabryne admits to Betryce the true nature of the miraculous birth(: H.115-40; R.79-91.) fundamentally weakens the story, and the defect is not repaired by a confused reference to the incident at a later point(75-91 : H.249-86;R.169-91.). Similarly, the redactor's failure to complete the story of Larkus(: H.1781-80;R.998-1010.), leaves an untidy strand in his version, while a minor omission elsewhere(265-274 : H.1104-75;R.693-79) causes an awkward break in the narrative sequence of the sort which he has generally tried to avoid.

A similar clash between the twin aims of the redactor,—to present the original story in coherent sequence while radically abbreviating it,—is evident in the results of another technical method employed by him. He has frequently reduced a passage in the Naissance to a few verses by selecting from it only those details essential to the plot and re-grouping these in a new, and frequently more effective, order. Where this has been done carefully and consistently, with a view to maintaining continuity in sequences where the French narrative switches erratically from topic to topic and from one setting to another,—in (219-230 : H.757-886;R.478-576.) and in (314-332 : H.1431-1533;R.863-909), for example,—the English version has a directness and clarity which could not have been achieved by abbreviation alone. The climax of the action(333-345 : H.1671-1702;R.971-97.) provides a particularly successful example of this technique, where, by concentrating on the essential action and recounting it in logical sequence, the redactor has avoided the

uneven and jerky effect which would inevitably have resulted from strict adherence to the original, which is extremely clumsy in arrangement at this point. Elsewhere, however, the same technique, badly handled, results in just that clumsiness and incoherence which it seems intended to avoid. The important section in which the characters are first introduced and the situation outlined (5-18 : H.33-45; H.16-24.) is confused by the erratic association of unrelated topics. And in another passage (105-119 : H.314-20; R.215-57.) there are examples of both success and failure: a well integrated picture drawn from scattered details in the original, followed by an incongruous mixture of generalised narration and minute descriptive touches. The general impression is that the redactor, while realising the value of the technique, applied it sporadically and inconsistently.

The most obvious method of abbreviation, by economy in expression and descriptive compression, is employed with a similar inconsistency. In some instances it is used with considerable skill, the lengthy dialogues of the original being recast in narrative form (46-56 : H.141-155; R.92-126.) and complex passages (231-264 : H.887-982; R.577-645.) simplified by concentration upon essential facts, to the neglect of incidental details. ⁽¹⁾ But, while in one instance (281-313 : H.1309-79; R.776-829.) an element ludicrously over-stressed in the French texts is limited in extent and condensed in expression with increased effectiveness, in another (153-178 : H.558-89; R.335-62.) material of minor importance is incongruously expanded in a manner which conflicts with its abbreviated context. And even where the policy of abbreviation is consistently followed it is frequently careless and inept in execution.

1) For similar passages see (141-152 : H.449-82; R.309-34.) and (219-230 : H.757-886; R.476-576.).

Neglect of minor but important details in one passage(19-32 : H.50-72; R.25-46.)causes vagueness and obscurity,while elsewhere(191-226 : H.619-83;R.386-431.)an attempt to avoid duplication of narrative results in incoherence and an inadequate rendering of the original. (1)

In view of this inconsistency in the technical handling of the redaction,it is not surprising that Chaucer's Iseult has,in general,been commented upon unfavourably. Due credit has been given for its sporadic success in limited sections: "The behaviour and speech of the Forest-reared boy in his efforts to acquaint himself with the common details of sophisticated life,are thoroughly well presented and make a strong humorous appeal;" "The pathetic picture at the end of the poem,—that of the sixth swan biting himself with his bill so that his breast bled,because of grief that he too could not be transformed—..... (2) gives a conclusion that remains firmly imprinted on the reader's memory." But the general verdict condemns the poem as "artistically incompetent" (3) and "quite un-imaginative". And certainly the judgement seems well deserved: the brief narrative is uneven in outline,crude and unpolished in manner,frequently incoherent in expression,sometimes obscure in meaning,and almost entirely lacking in poetic quality even of the humblest kind. Comparison with the original from which it was derived does little to justify the redactor as a literary craftsman. The unevenness of the redaction is clearly due to the erratic manner in which the process of adaptation has been carried out. Frequent changes in

1) For similar examples of unsatisfactory condensation see (37-45 : H.95-114;R.62-78.) and (57-74 : H.196-248;R.127-68.)

2) Wells,Mammal,p.97.

3) G.Kane,Middle English Literature,London,1951,p.9 and p.20.

the degree of abbreviation, awkward omissions and purposeless retentions or expansions of material, as well as occasional misunderstandings or misreadings of the source, all suggest a careless, unplanned and inartistic treatment by the English author.

Yet analysis of the process of redaction makes one thing abundantly clear: that, whatever his abilities as an artist, the redactor was not entirely lacking in creative spirit. His version of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne is not merely a translation of the French text, passively accepted by the English poet in every particular and reflecting nothing of native literary tastes and interests. It is evident that, whatever the precise form of his source may have been, he has radically reshaped it, freely transposing and ~~omitting~~, ~~concentrating~~ and abbreviating at will, with a single purpose in view. It seems clear that, whatever the scope of his original, he has shortened it considerably, ~~concentrating~~ for the most part on narrative incident and action to the exclusion of the details of characterisation, social setting and emotional analysis contained in the French text. Where the redaction succeeds it achieves a direct and close-packed narrative, and where it fails it is in over-zealous or ill-judged attempts to obtain the same effects. The English author may have lacked judgement and literary ability, but he was not without originality in the technical conduct of his redaction.

But analysis of the process employed makes it equally obvious that his originality did not extend to the re-interpretation of the Naissance: the English poem is in content and meaning, in emphasis, and in the balance of its component parts, more or less identical with its source. It is true that the fabulous and supernatural elements bulk larger, and seem even more improbable, than they do in the French texts, but this is an inevitable result of abbreviation, which isolates

the action of the story from the circumstantial detail surrounding it in the original and serves to rationalise it. This accidental effect apart, everything indicates that the redactor was catering for an audience whose literary tastes were almost identical with those of the French for whom the Naissance was originally written, though one which had less patience with descriptive matter, and presumably less time to spare. In his treatment of the story-matter, as distinct from the manner of his story-telling, the author of Chevalerie Assigne has made no significant change in the process of his redaction. But in his choice of subject one thing at least is significant: his decision to translate the Naissance in isolation from the other branches of the Cycle du Chevalier au Cygne. By so isolating it he has returned the story of the Swan-Children to the independent form in which it is represented in the Dolopathos, a tale of fantastic adventures to be enjoyed for their own sake, not because they add reflected glory to the reputation of a French hero of history and legend. Clearly, it was the intrinsic qualities of the story and not its association with Godfrey of Bouillon which gave it value in the eyes of the English redactor. He has not provided his readers with a chanson de geste such as the Crusade Cycle offered him, nor, despite the modern classification of his poem, with a Romance: "There is little of the atmosphere of romance, and much of the folk-tale. Strong and effective appeal is made to wonder, indignation, (1) pity, and desire for punishment of villainy." It was these elements which attracted the English poet to the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne. Their presence in the epic cycle of the crusades is explained by the earlier, independent, history of the Swan-Children legend. That the

1) Wells, Manual, p. 97.

alliterative poet chose to translate this episode, and this episode alone, is indicative of his literary interests and the tastes of the audience for whom he worked.

CHAPTER IV

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHIA

Although clearly one of the earliest alliterative romances in Middle English, Joseph of Arimathea is difficult to date with any certainty. Most authorities agree, however, in placing it about 1350 and in assigning it to the West Midlands. (1) The unique copy of the poem, contained in the Vernon MS. (No. 3938) of the Bodleian Library, has only once (2) been edited, and very little critical attention has so far been paid to the work. Skeat, as editor, was the first to identify the source as a portion of 'The History of the Holy Grail', the opening section of a vast French prose compilation known as the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Romances. (3)

These romances, in common with the Roman de Perceval ou le Conte del Graal of Chrétien de Troyes and other French works on the Grail legend, have been the subject of a great deal of controversy in the past.

1) See W. W. Skeat, Introduction to his edition, p. x; Notes, p. 75; Benwick and Orton, p. 370.

2) W. W. Skeat, Joseph of Arimathea, E. E. T. S., 44, London, 1871.

3) Op. cit., pp. xiv-xv.

Some measure of agreement as to their date, origin and inter-connection has, however, been established in recent years. Next in chronological order to Chrétien's Conte del Graal has been placed the work of Robert de Boron, who, at some date between 1191 and 1201, composed the Joseph d'Arimathie, a poem of just over 5,500 lines in octosyllabic couplets. This romance was designed to give the early history of the Grail and with it "Robert wrote a second poem, a Merlin, intended to connect the early history of the Grail with Arthur's court." Both the Joseph and Merlin of Robert de Boron were turned into prose almost immediately⁽¹⁾ and in this redaction the former is usually identified as the Perceval Saint Graal.

In addition to these comparatively brief works "there are two great cycles of Arthurian romances in prose:-

1) That which is known as the Vulgate or Walter Map Cycle.

2) That which is known as the Pseudo-Robert de Boron Cycle.

The Vulgate Cycle is so called because it became the most popular redaction of the romances in the Middle Ages, almost completely displacing all other versions. It is made up of the five great romances, L'Estoire del Saint Graal (or Grand Saint Graal, as scholars have called it, although this title is not found in the MSS.), L'Estoire de Merlin (prose rendering of Robert's Merlin plus a continuation), li Livres (L'Estoire) de Lancelot, la Queste del Saint Graal and La Mort Artu, and it exists either complete or in part in a large number of MSS.,—probably not far from a hundred. The name of Map is, also, given to this cycle, because the MSS. regularly ascribe to him the composition of the last three members of the cycle. This attribution, however, is manifestly a fiction

1) U.F.Holmes, A History of Old French Literature, revised ed., New York, 1948, p.293.

(1)
and has been generally rejected by recent scholars! From this corpus,
which has generally been assigned to the first third of the Thirteenth
(2)
century, was derived the Pseudo-Robert de Boron Cycle, so called because,
though most of the MSS. ascribe it to Robert, it is not thought possible
that he could have been the author. It was evidently planned in the
same divisions as the Vulgate, but only fragments of the cycle have
survived: the section corresponding to the Histoire du Saint Graal is
lost and has been replaced in some manuscripts by the prose rendering of
(3)
Robert's Joseph d'Arimathie.

These two prose versions, respectively the Grand and Petit
Saint Graal, together with the original verse form of Robert's Joseph,
were indicated by Skeat as the only likely sources of the English allit-
(4)
erative poem. His 'History of the Holy Grail' is the Grand Saint Graal,
the Histoire of the Vulgate Cycle, and there can, I think, be no doubt that
his identification of the original is correct. Later writers have gen-
(5)
erally accepted the ascription, but no one has so far made any detailed

1) J.B. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd. ed., Göttingen, 1928,
Vol. I, pp. 358-9.

2) V...le premier quart du XIII^e siècle? A. Bossonat, Le Moyen Âge, (Histoire
de la littérature française, (ed. J. Calvet) Vol. I, Paris, 1931, p. 118;
V...a de se constituer peu à peu entre 1220 et 1250? P. Sauter, Histoire
littéraire de la France médiévale (VI - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1934, p. 252;
V...plutôt vers 1210 que vers 1225? Lot, "Sur la date du Lancelot en
prose", Revue, LVII, 1931, p. 143.

3) See J.B. Bruce, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 459-61.

4) Op. cit., pp. xxii-xxiii.

5) See A.N. Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances (Yale
Studies in English, IX), New York, 1901, pp. 99-100; Walls, Manual, pp. 75-6;
Gibson, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. II, p. 44; Henwick and Orton, p. 370.

comparison of Joseph of Arimathea with its French source.

The basis of any such comparison must, of necessity, be the selection of that form of the Histoire del Saint Graal which most closely resembles the version given by the English poet, and which may reasonably be regarded as his immediate source or its closest surviving representative. This is made extremely difficult by the large number of Vulgate manuscripts which exist and the unsatisfactory state of our knowledge about the cycle as a whole and the Histoire in particular. Although much scholarly attention has been devoted to the Grail Romances, both prose and metrical, it has largely been directed to problems of authorship, Celtic and other influences, and the origin of the Grail symbol, to the comparative neglect of the texts themselves. (1) Some thirty years ago J.D. Bruce pointed out the necessity for a proper examination of the manuscript tradition and the establishment of the correct genealogy of the surviving copies: "in the case of the Vulgate Cycle.....we have (2) hitherto had no systematic investigation of this nature." At that time the need seemed likely to be met in the near future as Ferdinand Lot had recently announced, in his study on the Lancelot, a projected examination (3) of the manuscripts of the complete cycle. But this examination, so far as I can discover, was never published, and it is only very recently that Professor Woldege has provided the first list of Vulgate manuscripts

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- 1) For useful summaries of the Grail literature see:-
U.T. Holmes, A Critical Bibliography of French Literature: Vol. I, The Medieval Period, Syracuse, N.Y., 1947, pp. 115-121, and E. Bossonat, Manuel Bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge, Melun, 1951, pp. 172-89 and Supplément, Paris, 1955, pp. 49-53.
 Methodised bibliographies are also included in:-
A.B. Waite, The Holy Grail: its Legends and Symbolism, London, 1933, pp. 594-618, and J. Marz, La légende arthurienne et le grail, Paris, 1952, pp. 20-39.
 - 2) J.D. Bruce, "Considerate in the Investigation of the Old French Prose Romances of the Arthurian Cycle", Mod. Phil., XX, 1922-23, p. 339.
 - 3) See, F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, Paris, 1918.

(1)

which can pretend to completeness. Although this represents a great advance upon the very incomplete and inaccurate account previously given by H.O. Sommer, it does not list the Estoire texts separately and the scope of the work does not permit the inclusion of information on individual manuscripts which has emerged in recent years. The Estoire is still the most neglected portion of the cycle, and no critical text has yet been published. Under these circumstances there may be some value in a separate listing of Estoire manuscripts, incorporating some material to supplement that given by Professor Wolledge:-

(3)

a) Amsterdam, University Library: I A 24q.

(4)

b) Bonn, Universitätsbibliothek: 526.

c) Bourg, Bibliothèque Municipale: 55.

d) Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale: 9246.

(5)

e) Cambridge, University Library: Add.7071.

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- 1) E. Wolledge, Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500, (Société de publications romanes et françaises, III), Geneva, pp.71-79.
 - 2) H.O. Sommer, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, Vol. I: L'Estoire del Saint Graal, Washington, 1909, p. xix. See also p. xvii.
 - 3) The following editions contain useful details on Estoire MSS.:—
H.B. Wheatley, Berlin (Introduction by W.A. Lead) Vol. I, B.B.L.S., 10, London, 1899; J. Frappier, La Mort le Roi Artu, Paris, 1936, and, a new edition—, Geneva, 1954; G. Hutchings, Le Roman en prose de Lancelot Au Lac, Paris, 1938. See also the following studies:—A. Faugillet, Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, Paris, 1931; H.B. Fox, La Mort le Roi Artu, Paris 1913; H.G. Loomis and L.E. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art, London, 1935.
 - 4) This MS., though not mentioned by Sommer, is described by Frappier (La Mort le Roi Artu, Paris, 1936, p. xxiv) and Loomis (op.cit., p. 94) as containing almost a complete Vulgate Cycle, including the Estoire.
 - 5) This MS., discovered some ten years ago, was first described by Professor Vinaver (La Genèse de la Suite du Merlin in Mélanges offerts à Ernest Hoepfner, Paris, 1949, (Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 113), pp. 295-300) as containing an Estoire followed by a Berlin of the Pseudo-Robert de Boron Cycle. The manu-

- f) Chantilly, Musée Condé: 472; 476; 643.
- g) Cheltenham, Phillipps Collection: 1047; 3630; 3643. (1)
- h) Chicago, University Library: 712.
- i) Darmstadt, Hessische Landes und Hochschulbibliothek: 2534.
- j) Geneva, Library of M. Bodmer: (A MS., formerly Phillipps 1046);
(A MS., formerly in the collection
of the Duke of Newcastle).
- k) Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale: 266.
- l) Hove (Sussex), Library of Mr. D. E. Colman: (A MS., formerly Phillipps 1045)
- m) Le Mans, Bibliothèque Municipale: 354.
- n) Leningrad, Public Library: Fr. F.v, XV.5.
- o) London, British Museum: Royal 14. B. 111; Royal 19. B. 111; Add. 10292;
Add. 32125.
- p) New York, Pierpont Morgan Library: 36; 307. (2)
- q) Oxford, Bodleian Library: Douce 178; Douce 303. (3)

(Cont.)—script was acquired by Cambridge University Library and is described in the Catalogue as dating from c. 1300 and, in the section corresponding to the Vulgate cycle, conforming closely to the text published by Sommer, —British Museum, Add. 10292.

- 1) This identification is no longer correct as the Phillipps Collection has been dispersed by sale. I am indebted to a letter from Mr. T. J. Brown, Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum, for the following information:—"Phillipps MSS. 1045, 1046 and 1047 were in the Phillipps sale at Sotheby's, 1 July 1946, as lots 14, 8 and 10: 1045 went to Messrs. S. H. Robinson, 1046 to Messrs. Naggs and 1047 may have gone to a buyer named Scheller. We have no record of 3630 and 3643, but the residue of the Phillipps Collection is now owned by Messrs. W. H. Robinson, 16 and 17 Pall Mall. Two of these MSS. are now relocated in other private collections; No. 1045 in that of Mr. D. E. Colman at Hove, Sussex, and No. 1046 in that of M. Bodmer at Geneva, —see below under (1) and (j) respectively. I am informed by Messrs. Robinson that Nos. 3630 and 3643 are still in their possession but that they do not know the present whereabouts of No. 1047.
- 2) Both these manuscripts are fragmentary and the catalogue descriptions do not make it clear that they contain Stoaire texts.
- 3) These MSS., though not mentioned by Sommer, are listed by an earlier editor of the Stoaire (E. Foucher, Le Saint Graal, 3 vols., Le Mans, 1875-78, Vol. I, p. 24). They are more fully described by S. S. Murrell ("Some New Arthurian Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library", L.R., XII, 1927, pp. 87-90).

- r) Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Armenal: 2997; 3348; 3349; 3390; 3479.
- s) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 95; 96; 98; 105; 110; 113; 117; 344;
 (1)
 747; 749; 763; 770; 1426; 1427; 2455;
 9123; 12582; 19162; 24394; 24430.
- t) Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale: 255.
- u) Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana: Regim 1687.
 (2)
- v) Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale: 951.
- w) Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria: 1654.
 (3)
- x) Wollaton Hall (Nottinghamshire), Library of Lord Eddleston: (A MS.
 now deposited in the University of
 Nottingham).

This list comprises 57 manuscripts, yet it would be unwise to pretend that it is complete. The listing of estoire texts has always been complicated by the failure of some cataloguers to distinguish properly between the Grand and Petit Saint Graal, and there may still be some manuscripts wrongly included or omitted here. It is, moreover, highly probable that other texts of the estoire exist unnoticed in private collections or
 (4)
 wrongly identified in museums and libraries. There are, in addition, two early printed versions of the work:-

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- 1) Sommer (op.cit., p. xxx.) also listed No. 1428 as an estoire text: "C'est là une erreur, car il ne s'agit d'un texte du cycle, mais tout simplement d'un Perlesvaus..." (L.A. Mitae, "Sur les Manuscrits du Graal-Lancelot", Rev., LVI, 1930, p. 276). See also Mitae's edition of the Perlesvaus, (2 vols., Chicago, 1932-37) where this MS. is fully described.
 - 2) This MS. has only recently been listed amongst the estoire texts. It is mentioned by L.A. Paton (ed. Les Prophecies de Merlin, Vol. I., London, 1926, p. 24) as containing, amongst other items, an Histoire du Saint Graal, and more fully described by L. Delisle (Notices et Extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres bibliothèques, XLIII, ii, pp. 219-220).
 - 3) The identification of this as an estoire text is uncertain.
 - 4) See P. Lot, Étude sur le Lancelot en prose, (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, sciences historiques et philologiques, No. 226), Paris, 1928, Note, p. 2, on the MSS. of the Vulgate Cycle as a whole:—"Enfin les

- i) Ed. of Jehan Petit, Gallot du Pré, Michel le Noir, 2 vols., Paris, 1534-1535.
(1)
- ii) Ed. of Philippe Lenoir, Paris, 1583.

The sixty-odd texts so far known present a sufficiently complex problem in themselves, since the proper treatment of our subject would require the consideration of which,--if any, of them was the source of the English poem. It is, indeed, doubtful whether, in view of the large number of manuscripts which must long ago have disappeared, such an identification could be made with any certainty. (2) With the assistance of a careful classification of texts, such as has been attempted for other parts of the cycle, it might at least be possible to select the group or family of manuscripts to which the alliterative poem is most closely related. Since we still lack such a classification nothing can usefully be done in this connection at present. The textual analyses so far attempted suggest, however, that this lack is not such a serious drawback as it might at first sight appear to be. "Les différentes versions..... différent presque toutes par un mélange infini de petits riens qui

(Cont.) bibliothèques particulières et les bibliothèques d'Espagne peuvent sans doute grossir les chiffres précédents d'une manière appréciable"; and A. Paughilet (*op. cit.*, p. v) on the MSS. of the *Questes*: "Nous ne prétendons, à notre tour, dresser une liste définitive: il reste toujours possible que quelque bibliothèque ou collection ait échappé aux recherches".

- 1) See, U. T. Holmes, ed., *Critical Bibliography of French Literature: Vol. I, The Medieval Period*, Syracuse, N. Y. 1947, p. 116, and A. Villey, "The Prose Romances of Chivalry", in *Studies in the French Renaissance*, C. U. P., 1922, p. 23.
- 2) In this connection Sommer (*op. cit.*, p. ix) has pointed out: "...when he takes into consideration that we do not possess a single manuscript of any part of the cycle of a date earlier than about A. D. 1270, although it is reasonably certain to have reached the last phase in its development, i. e., the form in which we possess it, at the very latest by 1215, he will be compelled to acknowledge that a goodly number of manuscripts which came into existence up to 1270 must have perished".

modifient le texte sans l'améliorer. La première feuille, en ne suivant qu'un seul ms., en est couverte à chaque ligne, et cela pour mettre Artus au lieu de le roi. fit-il pour dit-il, furent pour estoient...⁽¹⁾ This particular comment refers to the Queste, but it is equally applicable to other branches of the Vulgate Cycle. "Le texte de la Mort Artu, tout comme celui de La Queste, a été modifié littéralement de copie en copie par la fantaisie ou le sans-gêne des scribes; s'ils ont respecté le plus souvent le sens général des phrases, ils se sont largement permis de substituer au texte de leur modèle des expressions équivalentes ou similaires. Ils ont rarement été jusqu'à des remaniements importants et aux interpolations étendues: mais dans des proportions variées ils ont tantôt raccourci sur le texte pour alléger leur tâche, tantôt au contraire ils l'ont allongé et ont prétendu l'enjoliver d'additions personnelles. Il résulte de ces faits que les manuscrits de La Mort Artu diffèrent entre eux par un pullulement de variantes minimes et dénuées de signification: ne...pas au lieu de ne...mie; quant pour a celui tens que; i sera au lieu de i vendra, etc....⁽²⁾ So far as I can judge from the texts which are generally available this is equally true of the Histoire manuscripts: they differ, for the most part, in minor details only, matters of phraseology which do not affect the narrative outline, and which are not more significant than those from the Queste and the Mort Artu quoted above. Since the English poem is very far from being a close literal translation of the

1) A. Pauphilet (op.cit., p.xrv) is here quoting from a letter of H. Michant to F.J. Furnivall printed in the latter's edition of the Queste (La Queste del Saint Graal, Roxburghe Club, London, 1864) p.xi.

2) J. Frappier, ed. la Mort le Roi Artu, Paris, 1936, pp.xxvii-xxviii. Pauphilet (op.cit., pp.xrv-xrvi) gives a similar explanation of the type of variant common to the Vulgate manuscripts.

French prose these variants in matters of wording are not likely to be of much importance, and we may accept the available texts of the Listoire as presenting the original which the poet had before him in all its essential features.

Three different manuscripts have so far been published: British Museum, Royal MS. 14.2.iii by F.J. Furnivall, the manuscript of (1) Le Mans by G. Bucher, and British Museum Add. MS. 10292 by H.O. Sommer, -which I shall indicate as F, B and S respectively. For purposes of comparison with the English poem it would be preferable to select whichever of these texts most closely resembles the alliterative work, but, as the general nature of the Vulgate variants would lead us to expect, there is very little evidence on which to base such a choice. A study of the proper names involved shows that they are either those of well-known places, -'Aramathie', 'Babiloyne', 'Brutayne', 'Egipte', 'Galile', 'Jerusalem', - which are more likely to be presented in a form dictated by the redactor's previous acquaintance with the word than in that given by his French sources, or, in the case of names peculiar to the story, that the spelling variants are too slight to have any significance. The following are the only examples of any interest:-

<u>Joseph of</u> <u>Arimathie</u>	<u>F</u> (Royal 14.2.iii)	<u>B</u> (Le Mans MS.)	<u>S</u> (Add. 10292)
Carboye	Farabiel	Tarrabiel	Carabel/Charabel
Cleomadas	Climachideus	Climachides	Blamoides
Magister	Quagre	Quage	Enaise

1) F.J. Furnivall, Seynt Graal or The Sank Ryol, 2 vols., Bexturche Club, London, 1861-63; G. Bucher, Le Saint Graal, 3 vols., Le Mans, 1875-78; H.O. Sommer, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, Vol. I: L'histoire del Saint Graal, Washington, 1909. Furnivall's edition was partly re-issued in Lovelich's History of the Holy Grail, E.E.T.S., E.3.,

Seraphe

Serourges

Seraphes

Seraphes

Aloingues

Avalachin

Avalachin

Avalacin

Agais

Agais

Agais

Agais

The evidence here is conflicting and may be explained either on the assumption that the English poet allowed himself considerable liberty in adapting the proper names in his original,—reading them, perhaps, rather imperfectly in the French MS.—, or that he had as his source a manuscript other than one of these but, like them, related to the common French version, in which he found his variant forms.

The only other evidence available is equally slight, but serves to support the latter assumption. It is provided by the mention in the alliterative poem of certain concrete facts, references to dates, the numbers of armies, etc., which may serve as points of comparison with the three printed texts of the French prose:—

- I)sire", he seie, "and sonenday is nouwe" (1.1.)
 F(12/6.):.....des venredi iusqu'a hui et ie quit qu'il soit
 hui diemenches....
 H(115/20.):.....des venredi jusques a hui et jou quit qu'il soit
 hui diemences.... (2)
 S(18/17.):.....des venredi jusques a hui.

- II) "Hit is two and fourti winter", þei seiþen, "trewely forsoþe,
 Siþen þou souȝtest þis put and to prison eodest!"
 (11.3-4.)
 F(32/13.):.....ke vous aues este xliij ans en prison....
 H(116/4.):.....que vous aues estot xliij ans en prison....
 S(18/20.):.....qu'il a xliij ans tous accomplis....

- III) Foure þousend and seue score was þe summe holden,
 (1.95.)
 F(46/9.):.....c.mille et xl mile....
 H(138/2.):.....vii vins et iiii mile....
 S(23/21.):.....vij et iiii mille....

(Cont.) 20, 24, 28, 30 and 95, London, 1874-1905, but the French prose serves only to supply the missing part of Levalich's poem and is not reproduced in full as a parallel text.

- 1) References throughout are to the page and line of the various editions in this instance to Vol. I of Furnivall's text and Vol. II of Hucher's.
- 2) Note, however, that the fact that the day is Sunday is stated earlier in S, though the exact phrase translated by the English poet

- IV) "I naue felauscupe wipouten," seils losepn, "wel 4-boute
fifti, (1.105.)
F(56/9.):.....i en ma compaignie en-chore lxxv....
H(152/17.):.....ai en ma compaignie lxxv....
S(26/36.):.....ai en ma compaignie lxxv....

- V) Gold and seluer he seils and asur forsophe. (1.195.)
F(59/29.):.....les vnes d'or et les autres d'asur....
H(159/14.):.....les unes d'or et les autres d'asur....
S(29/22.):.....dont les vnes estoient d'or et les autres d'argent
et les autres d'aisur....

- VI) pat on beres in his hond a cros of queynte newe;
pat oper beres in his hond preo blodt nayles;
pe pridde pe coroune pat his hed keuerde;
pe feorpe, pe launce pat lemede him wip-inne;
And pe fyfpe a blodt clop pat he was inne i-braced,
Whon he lay after slaunt in pe sepulcre.
(11.201-60.)

- F(65/29-70/7.) (The relics of the crucifixion listed here are:-
a cross, three nails, a lance, a sponge and a scourge.)
H(174/11-175/3.) (Three nails, a lance, a sponge and a scourge.)
S(32/15-23.) (A cross, three nails, a lance, a cloth and a scourge.)

- VII) With sixti pousent," he seide, "of clene men of armes,
And fifti pousend fot-men pat redi bep to finte,
(11.408-9.)
F(91/13.):.....xix mille homes a pie....
H(208/6-7.):.....de trente mille homes cheuanchans et de soixante-
dix mille homes a piet....
S(46/22-23.):.....xix cheualiers et a lx homes a pie....

The results to be drawn from these few test cases are equally inconclusive, failing to indicate any one of the three MSS. examined as the immediate source of the English poem. Nos. I and II suggest either F or H but not S, while No. III would indicate either H or S but not F, and No. V points to S rather than F or H. Nos. IV, VI and VII, in which there is no agreement with any of the French versions, suggest, as before, that the poet was either highly independent in his attitude to the concrete details of his original or that he used a manuscript which differed from the texts cited

(Cont.) (the imperfect MS. of the alliterative work beginning in the middle of this sentence) is found only in F and H.

in these particulars. There is nothing surprising in the latter supposition in view of the large number of Seitoire MSS. which, as the surviving copies indicate, must once have been in circulation. The evidence given above is too slight to be of much value but it suggests at least that there is no textual justification for selecting any one of the three printed versions in preference to the others.

There are, however, other reasons for such a preference.

Sommer's edition, as the most modern, might seem the obvious choice, but it has been severely criticised as no more than a transcript without scholarly apparatus of any sort: "Pour le lecteur ou pour l'érudit, elle n'est point supérieure à celle de Furnivall...." (1) Both Sommer and Furnivall chose manuscripts which have been generally condemned as faulty and frequently unintelligible, and neither editor did much to correct his text by the provision of variants. On the other hand Hucher, who had considerable experience of the Vulgate manuscripts, thought highly of the De Sans MS. which he printed: "V...il est certainement un des plus anciens qui existent...." (2) In spite of its comparatively early date his edition, the text of which was carefully compared with a number of

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- 1) A. Fauphilet (op.cit., p. xxiv) refers here to the editions of the Queste by Furnivall and Sommer, but as these are based on the same two cycloic MSS. utilized by them in their Seitoire editions his remark may be taken as applying equally to the latter. In fairness to Sommer it should be pointed out that it was not his aim to present a critical edition of the Vulgate romances, but merely to provide a uniform text from one MS. of the cycle with which all other MSS. could be collated; a necessary preliminary to a critical edition. He was, however, unfortunate in his choice of manuscript.
 - 2) See A. Fauphilet, op.cit., p. xviii.
 - 3) A. Hucher, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 14.

other manuscripts and amply provided with variant readings, seems the most suitable for our purpose. It is upon a comparison with his text of the Estoire del Saint Graal that the following analysis of Joseph of Arimathea is based.

The whole question of the choice of a French text for such a purpose is greatly reduced in importance by the general nature of the English redaction. It is a greatly condensed version of the original, in which the comparatively slight variations between the manuscripts are not likely to be significant: 57 pages of Sommer's folio edition and 180 pages of Hucher's text in octavo being compressed into 109 alternative long lines. The English manuscript is, however, defective at the beginning and Skene estimated that just under a hundred lines of the poem have been lost. If this estimate is accurate the missing section must have been still more highly condensed, covering in about an eighth of the total work matter contained in the first 114 pages of Hucher's text. The French prose begins with a lengthy introduction in which the author affects to explain how the material came into his possession.

- 1) Most of the variants are drawn from MS.2455 of the Bibliothèque Nationale: V...le plus clair et le plus complet de tous les manuscrits du Saint Graal, mais non le plus exact et le plus rapproché de la version originale. Celui du Darn, plus obscur, à raison de la suppression d'un grand nombre d'articles et de prépositions, de la substitution de la conjonction que au mot car et d'autres archaïsmes de langage, est bien plus logique et plus voisin du sens primitif? (E. Hucher, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 15). Hucher had not examined all the Estoire MSS. then known, and others have been discovered since he wrote, but until the manuscripts as a whole have been analysed in detail his opinion is probably the best guide available in the choice of a text.
- 2) In Sommer's edition the relevant portion covers pp. 18-75, and in Hucher's, Vol. II, pp. 115-295.
- 3) Op.cit., pp. vii-ix.
- 4) In Hucher's edition Vol. II, pp. 1-39. The Estoire occupies Vol. II and the first 308 pages of Vol. III in Hucher's edition, but as the section to which the English poem corresponds does not extend beyond Vol. II this is always to be taken as the volume referred to here.

Christ, appearing to him in a vision, had given him a little book of his own composition to copy, and in preparation for the task he endured various trials and adventures which he details at length. It may well have been that the English poet, apparently anxious to reduce the bulk of his original, omitted this introduction altogether; though it no doubt served to give the story which follows a sacred significance in the eyes of Middleval readers, it has no essential bearing on the narrative proper. He may, on the other hand, have appreciated the authority which its inclusion would give to his poem, though we can be sure that if he translated it at all it was in an abbreviated form.

This must also have been true of the 75 pages which follow, -that part of the Histoire proper which is lacking in the extant English version. (1) At the crucifixion Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a follower of Christ, obtains (2) "li vaisseau u Jhesus crucifieit", in which he collects the Saviour's blood, and, because he buries his body, is seized by the Jews and imprisoned "en une fort maison qui estoit l'envasque Caifas" (3) Many years afterwards the Emperor Vespasian, coming to Jerusalem to avenge the death of Christ, rescues Joseph from the pit in which he has been confined. At this point the existing English text begins in the middle of a line, with Joseph's assurance that his long imprisonment has seemed no more than three days to him.

The opening lines of the poem provide a typical example of one method employed by the poet in reducing and compressing his original. A close verbal parallel indicates the point in the French prose which

1) In Bucher's edition pp. 39-115.

2) Ibid., p. 59.

3) Ibid., p. 69.

corresponds to the opening of the mutilated English text:-

Et Vespasiens li dist: "Joseph combien quidiés-vous avoir
 secourre arreste prison?" Et Joseph dist: "Sire, jou i
 guide avoir demoreré des venredi jusques à hui et jou
 quit qu'il soit hui diemenoes. Et venredi despendi-jou
 le vraie prophète de la crois, pour qui jou fui en prison
 mis." Et quant il eut chon dist, si se coumenchièrent à rire tou
 tout chail qui estoient environ, car quidièrent que il
 fust ieci estourdis. Mais plus s'esmerveilla Cayphas de
 chon qu'il avoit tant vesqui sans boire et sans mangier.
 Et Vespasiens li dist: "Par foi, il ne font entendant que
 il a XLII ans que le prophète mie en la crois, et que
 vous avés esté XLII ans en prison, et quant vous fustes
 emprisennés, Tybérus César estoit empereur de Rome
 et puis en y a-il été III et or est nos pères li quart?"
 Et quant Joseph oï çou, si s'esmerveilla moult durement.
 (115/17-116/3.)

In the alliterative poem this occupies six lines:-

.....sire; he seide, "and sonenday is nouwe"
 Penne alle launwhen an neij pat herden his wordes,
 "Hit is two and fourti winter," þei seijen, "trewely forso þe,
 Biþen þou soustest þis put and to prison eodest."
 "Now I þonke my lord," seide Ioseph, "pat lente me of his grace;
 We pinkep but þreo niȝt al þis ilke þrove."
 (11.1-5.)

The essentials of the narrative, as well as the dialogue form, are here retained in a passage which is as brief as possible without being too bald. Two of the details omitted,--the reference to Joseph's service at the crucifixion and the dating by the reign of Tiberius,--the poet could assume to be matters of common knowledge, and the mention of Caiaphas would be superfluous since, so far as one can judge from the surviving portion of the poem, his role in the story seems to have been completely ignored by the redactor. This type of compression, in which the narrative outline is separated from a great deal of incidental detail, is practised throughout the redaction, usually, however, on a much wider scale than in this brief version, and often with results which are far less successful.

Ⓐ (116/3-116/9.) The poet's treatment of this portion of the French text, which follows immediately upon that quoted above, illustrates his other major method of reducing the original to the slender proportions

which he seems to have thought suitable for his purpose: the passage is completely omitted and its contents have left no trace in the English work. It is concerned with Vespasian's punishment of Caiaphas, at the best a subsidiary theme, and, since the poet makes the Jews as a whole, rather than any individual, responsible for the ill-treatment of Joseph, one which could be deleted without harming the development of the narrative. This means of abbreviating the original, by omission of lengthy passages, often extending to several pages of Bucher's text, is employed again and again, often, unfortunately, with harmful effects upon the sequence of episodes and even the meaning of the poem.⁷

(7-11 : 121/10-18 and 123/8-16.) With this omission the English author proceeds at once to the baptism of Joseph and his subsequent baptism of Vespasian and his followers. The matter is drawn from two separate passages in the French, lifted from their context somewhat later in the narrative. Similar alterations in the sequence of the prose text and combinations of disconnected incidents occur constantly throughout Joseph of Arimathea, sometimes with a beneficial effect in the shortened form of the poem, but often resulting in confusion and ambiguity. In this instance the re-arrangement would appear to be without particular significance, except, perhaps, to suggest that baptism was Joseph's first concern on being released. The somewhat haphazard nature of the redaction as a whole may make it unwise to read too much significance into changes of this sort.

(12-20 : 119/9-14 and 122/1-8.) Having earlier omitted all mention of the punishment imposed upon Caiaphas, the redactor now returns to take up the brief general reference to Vespasian's revenge upon the Jews with which that section in the French concludes. In the shortened

form of the poem this general reference is, no doubt, more valid than the particular instance, but the poet loses the fine point of the prose author, - that Christ is revenged upon His own people by a pagan, - by placing the incident after and not, as in the French, before the baptism of Vespasian. The loss is a minor one, but it serves as an example of the numerous small points throughout the work in which the redactor has failed to understand or appreciate his source, or has confused and altered its meaning in his desire to abbreviate it. The mistake, in this instance, has arisen through his attempt to combine two passages upon the same subject, the second of which refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Vespasian, some years after his conversion and baptism. But here, for once, there is no gain in brevity as the poet has seen fit to provide details of the persecution of the Jews which, so far as the three published texts indicate, were not contained in his source. The passage, like others in the poem, is somewhat ambiguous, but the idea of the Jews being forced to leap down fifty feet into the pit where Joseph has been imprisoned since the death of Christ shows a sense of irony, as well as a faculty of invention which scarcely appears elsewhere in the redaction.

[: 121/15-123/8.) Having already made use of the few lines referring to Vespasian's sack of Jerusalem, the poet ignored the remainder of the context, the main point of which is quite remote from the purpose to which they have been put. It concerns an incident in the attack by which the Emperor's conversion is revealed to his father, from whom he had previously concealed it. This is a side issue even in the French text and, as Vespasian has no further part to play in the story, could safely be omitted without harm to the sequence or significance of the English version.]

(21-25 : 119/14-121/9.) The story proper now begins with the divine

direction that Joseph should set out upon a mission of conversion. The poet has compressed the essential details from a lengthy passage into five lines, omitting to mention the vision of Christ from which the instructions emanate, but including the warning that Joseph and his family must never return to Jerusalem, while leaving its significance obscure by neglecting Christ's announcement that He intends to people distant lands with their descendants.

(26-37 : 123/16-125/3.) Joseph and his followers set out from Jerusalem, and the English narrative of their progress, their fears upon the journey and reassurance by their leader, follows, in outline, the content of the French. The sequence of certain passages has been altered, though merely as an aid to compression, and descriptive detail is very greatly reduced. For the most part the abbreviation is made without the loss of anything valuable in the French, but there are two examples within as many lines of the poet misunderstanding or misreading his source. The Jews, upon their journey:-

....vinrent a I bois qui estoit a damie liue de Bretagne,
si avoit noutli bon des agais et si estoit apielée par
son non, pour ceo que en cel bois, fut agnitién Hérodes
des traitres, quant li juis le livrèrent a Erce, le roi
de Damas, pour sa fille que il avoit laissée, quant il
priet la fille Phelippe son frère. (124/16-125/3.)

But in the English this has become:-

A-morwe pei weore dijt and don hem to Jonge,
And come to a forest with floures ful feire,
pat was called Argos, pat pe kyng oujte,
In pe lond of Damas, pe cuntre was dere. (11. 34-37.)

The proper names in the Histoire vary so much from manuscript to manuscript and are so often corrupted (the Bretagne of this passage is Béthanie in all the variants cited by Hucher, and the latter is obviously the correct form) that the poet may well have found Argos in his source.

243
If, however, he made the change from Agais, it is clear that he did not appreciate the significance of the name ("li bos des agais" = the wood of asbark) any more than he understood the reference to "le rei de Damas": catching at the name he has transferred the wood, -half a league from Bethany-, to the Kingdom of Damascus. Instances of this sort of misunderstanding, which are quite common in the poem, suggest a somewhat careless reading of the French and, perhaps, a rather uncertain grasp of its meaning. (13-43 : 126/1-127/2.) The alliterative poem continues to follow the sequence of the prose, with Christ's command to Joseph that he should build an ark to contain the Holy Grail. The reference to "Pat ilke blod pou barest a-boute"(1.40.) occurs somewhat awkwardly, as the Grail has not previously been mentioned in the English version. Presumably the poet had explained how it came into Joseph's possession in the opening lines which are now lost. This passage represents a very condensed form of the French, omitting reiterated promises of divine aid in return for strict obedience, but making use of lines upon the practical function which the ark is to fulfil throughout the story:-

Whan þe lust speke with me, lift þe lide sone,
þou schalt fynde me redi, riȝt bi þi syde,
And, bote þou and þi sone, me no mon touche. (11.41-43.)

⌘ : 127/23-128/11.) The French author describes the building of the ark according to divine instruction: the economical English poet leaves it to the reader's imagination, and, without loss of meaning, maintains the continuity of his narrative.]

(44-51 : 129/11-130/8.) By this omission, and by transposing a slightly later passage in the French, the poet has combined two separate commands of Christ in a single message delivered by a supernatural voice. In the original version Joseph is instructed to convert and implies the

inhabitants of Barras, the first city at which the mission arrives, but, as the poet has not allowed the narrative of the journey there to intervene, he alters this to a more general charge:-

And Ioseph, walk in þe world & preche myne wordes (l.44.)
The result is concise and effective, and suggests a deliberate attempt to minimise the disruptive rapidity with which one episode gives place to the next in the abbreviated version by taking liberties with the sequence of events.

(52-56 : 128/11-129/11.) The poet now turns back to translate the essential details of the journey to Barras, and in his abbreviation of the French makes one of the frequent errors which suggest a rather cursory reading of the original or a deficient knowledge of the language. The city, he says:-

....was called Barras, þer Sarayne sprongen,
Ereat þow Abranames wyf, þat wonede þer-inne.
(ll.53-56.)

But the effect of the lengthy passage in the original is precisely the opposite:-

Ne ne sont pas à croire oil qui dient que Barras
Furent apielé de la femme Abraham; (128/15-16.)

(57-64 : 130/9-132/19.) The English narrative of the Jews' entrance to Sarra and their appearance before the king in the temple moves on rapidly, eight lines providing only a sketchy outline of the French original. Many necessary details are omitted altogether: the king's name is not given, and, although he is to be one of the central characters, it is not until much later (l.214.) that he is identified as Balak. His cognomen, "li Hengouens", and the mystery of his birth, are also passed over, even though they are material to a later incident in the poem (ll.22-30.). And, similarly, his failure to find support amongst

his barons for the war with Egypt is referred to so vaguely that it leaves what follows,—his attempt to obtain advice and assistance from Joseph,—improperly explained and motivated. Excessive compression of this sort occurs sporadically throughout the poem and often makes nonsense of the original narrative.

(65-74 : 132/1-135/8.) The section which follows is no less drastically reduced, but here the effect is more beneficial than harmful. The French prose is wordy and repetitive and in the redaction the content of several pages,—Joseph's promise of aid for the king through the power of Christ, and Eualak's curiosity as to how he can be aided by one who is already dead,—is successfully conveyed in a few conversational exchanges between the two.

(75-181 : 135/9-138/13.) Joseph, in order to reassure Eualak, begins a lengthy account of the Annunciation, the birth of Christ, the massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt. As this is all biblical material with which every Medieval reader would already be familiar, it might have been expected that a redactor anxious to reduce the scale of his work would content himself with a brief paraphrase. But, for the moment, the poet's eagerness to advance the narrative gives way to a homiletic interest and the passage is retained on much the same scale as the original, and with a similar reflection of biblical wording and phraseology. Joseph's sermon is a necessary preliminary in the conversion of Eualak, but the scope given to it is out of proportion in a redaction where equally significant details of the plot are confused in abbreviation or omitted altogether.

(182 : 139/14-140/12.) With surprising suddenness the English author returns to a policy of radical abbreviation. The French version continues its account of the life of Christ, His ministry, betrayal,

248
crucifixion and resurrection, but, although this might be considered the most material part of Joseph's sermon, it is entirely omitted from the English redaction. There is no apparent reason for this change of method: it is true that most of Evalak's later questions concern the birth of Christ, but the poet has already included much more than is necessary for the introduction of the topic. Presumably this complete omission is designed to compensate for the excessive length at which the first half of the homily is given.]

(102-104 : 133/16-29.) The English author contrives his own conclusion to the sermon by returning to take up a few lines, ignored earlier in his much condensed version of the passage, where they occur (65-74 : 132/1-135/8). They show Joseph urging Evalak to destroy the images of his heathen gods, and the poet was apparently prompted to insert them here by reading in his source that the Egyptian idols fell down before the infant Christ and were broken to pieces. The topic is one which is to be of importance later in the story of Evalak, but as a moral conclusion to Joseph's discourse it is dragged in rather awkwardly. But it is not much more suitably placed in the original, and the re-arrangement at least suggests the degree of freedom which the poet permitted himself in making his redaction.

(105-136 : 140/13-145/18.) He now returns to the sequence of the original, condensing a lengthy discussion between Joseph and Evalak on the mystery of the Virgin Birth, partly by reducing the wordy arguments in the French to comparatively straightforward statements, and partly by omitting some passages altogether. Most of these omissions are quite beneficial: one passage (142/20-143/5), for example, contains an appeal from Joseph to be heard without interruption, which, in the abbreviated English narrative,

would be an unwarranted deviation from the argument itself.

[: 145/15-151/11.) In the press text the argument is extended to the nature and meaning of the Trinity, which Joseph explains at great length. It would appear, however, that the poet's interest in such didactic material has already been satisfied, and, indeed, much that he omits is merely confused repetition of the matter already dealt with in earlier passages.]

(137-150 : 151/12-152/3.) The theological discussion continues and is concluded when Joseph confutes the clerks appointed by Evalak to debate with him. The king admits:-

....."pe lengore I here,
pe lesse reason I see in pat pat pou rikeneest.
(11.137-38.)

and, indeed, the argument is even more confused in the English version than in the French, though the latter is never very straightforward in expression. Evalak asks a question about the nature of the Trinity, but Joseph's answer has more bearing upon the Virgin Birth. This confusion is apparently due to the poet's fragmentary recollection of some points in the previous section, omitted as a whole, which he inserts, often inappositely, in the conclusion of the debate.

(151-168 : 152/3-153/9.) The narrative turns to personal details of Joseph and his company, who are promised shelter by the king and a further audience on the following day. The passage does little to advance the action and adds nothing to what we already know about the band of Jews, yet the English author gives it at almost equal length, and, for the moment, adheres closely to his source.

[: 153/9-154/12.) At this point the Roisins introduces an important new character, Josephus, the son of Joseph of Arimathea. When Evalak asks why the Jews go barefoot and in poverty it is he who replies

with a homily on the proper service of God. The fact that the English author omits the passage altogether is not necessarily an indication that he had no interest in didactic material of this sort: the French contains so many similar homilies that to have included them all would have unbalanced a redaction in which the narrative proper is so much abbreviated.

(169-174 : 154/13-155/10.) A direct statement of Joseph's learning in matters of religion allows the redactor to introduce him effectively, if somewhat abruptly, in spite of this omission. The treatment of this brief section of narrative demonstrates the freedom with which the redactor re-arranges his source even when retaining its substance. The French reads:-

Quant li roys oï cheluy si bien parler, si demanda à Joseph,
qui il estoit, et comment il avoit non. Et Joseph li dist:
"Sire, il est mes fier, et si est apielés par son non
Josephes. Et dist que il savoit tant que nus clers de son
age peüst savoir plus, et si parloit si bien et si biel
comme il avoit oï. (154/13-155/3.)

The English version is cast throughout in direct speech:-

"I trouwe þat beo þi sone," bi Iosaph ne seide.
"Ȝe, sire, so ne is, for soþe as I þe telle."
"Con ne out of clergie?" seis þe kyng þenne.
"Leeue me forsoþe, sire, þer liues no better."
(11.169-72.)

This type of adaptation, applied to many passages of much greater length, often makes the abbreviation clearer and more forceful in expression. Unfortunately the effect is all too often spoilt by such meaningless tags as "for soþe as I þe telle", which serve no useful purpose except in connection with the alliteration.

(175-184 : 155/11-156/14.) A similar brevity of expression is employed to condense the prose description of Evalak pondering over the problems of his war with Egypt and what Joseph has told him of the Christian

mysteries. But here the abbreviation is only partly successful. The nature of Evalak's anxieties is much more concisely and directly stated, but the account of a vision which is sent to help him,—a tree with three branches or trunks, one of which has darker bark than the others—, is so greatly compressed as to be vague and difficult to understand without reference to the French.

[: 156/15-158/11.) The Estoire contains a lengthy description of further details connected with the vision, which leave no doubt as to its meaning: the tree is a symbol of the Trinity, and the branch with darker bark represents Christ as man in the flesh. The English author, apparently finding these mystical details excessive, has omitted them completely. Had his translation of the previous section been adequate the omission would not be harmful, but, as it stands, the poem requires the addition of these features to make it comprehensible.]

(186-186 :) The poet, apparently aware that his treatment of Evalak's vision is inadequate, adds two lines directly explaining the symbolism. These fulfil the function of the long passage previously omitted and are obviously suggested by it. But nothing in the French directly corresponds to them, and, although it is possible that the manuscript used by the poet contained a variant passage of this nature, they should probably be regarded as one of the rare instances of independent interpolation on his part.

(187-211 : 158/11-162/17.) Evalak's vision continues with a further illustration of the Trinity in the symbolic form of a tree with three stems, on each of which is written the chief attribute associated with a member of the Godhead. This is followed by a vision of the Virgin Birth, symbolised by a child entering and then leaving a room without

seeming to pass through the door. In spite of his earlier tendency to neglect esoteric material of this sort, the poet includes both incidents at considerable length, keeping closely to the content and sequence of the original. The details which he suppresses are those of human interest: the king is joined by his chamberlain, whose terror at what he sees is apparently designed to heighten the wonder of the vision, but the English author, though he retains the character, omits the passages which describe his fears. As a result the chamberlain seems a rather meaningless figure, who could well have been deleted altogether.

(212-229 : 162/18-166:14.) The scene changes abruptly:-

Now we leuen þe kyng and of Ioseph carpen; (l.212.)

But in this the poet is merely following his source which gives, at great length, Joseph's prayer for help in the conversion of Evalak. This is an invocation in the name of those whom God has aided in the past,--Ioseph, David, Daniel, Mary Magdalene, etc.--and it is chiefly these scriptural references which are retained in the English redaction at the expense of the more material plea for assistance in converting Evalak. A divine voice replies that "þe kyng schal sone torne", (l.229.) and the poet passes at once to a different topic.

¶ (: 166/14-167/9.) The French author, however, goes on to give God's command that the Christian company is to pray before the ark, coupled with the promise of a sacred office for Josaphe. The omission of these instructions from the English version gives the action which springs from them the appearance of being spontaneous. But it is unlikely that this spontaneity has any significance in the poet's scheme, where motivation, even though divine, appears to be much less important than action. Though his attitude is by no means unvarying, he frequently

neglects such sections as this in favour of narrative passages which carry the story forward.]

(230-233 : 167/3-168/18.) The absence of any evident and sustained policy of abbreviation is clearly demonstrated in what follows. As Joseph returns to his bed after prayer the author reflects upon the state of continence in which he lives with his wife and reveals that their youngest son, Galahad, was only engendered at the express command of God. Even in the loose and rambling form of the Estoire this is something of an excursus, though Galahad is to appear as a character much later in the story and his descendants are the principal figures in other branches of the cycle. But, as Joseph of Arimathie does not extend even to the birth of Galahad and makes no mention of his descendants, the poet's careful inclusion of this passage can only have been intended as a literary reference, for the pleasure of readers familiar with the ensemble of the Arthurian romances. The fact that he confuses Joseph's son with the more famous Galahad, the son of Lancelot, makes it all the more probable that this is why he troubled to translate the lines.

(234-238 : 168/19-25.) The story moves on. Joseph and his followers come, on the following morning, to pray before the ark. (The English author mentions Joseph only, though a few lines later he assumes the presence of the others: minor errors of this sort are legion throughout the redaction.) The passage is an essential narrative link, preparing the scene for what follows, and is, therefore, retained by the poet at almost equal length.

[: 169/14-170/7.) In a passage which has an obvious biblical source the Holy Ghost descends upon the Christians as tongues of flame. This is, however, only one of many miraculous occurrences which crowd

upon each other in the following pages, and, as no specific event arises from it, the redactor can omit it without in any way weakening his narrative.]

(239-256 : 170/8-173/25.) Once again the voice of Christ is heard, first exhorting the Jews to be more faithful than those of their race who crucified Him, and then promising Joseph:-

Ichal bi-take pe to-day, in a good tyme,
On pe nijsate ping holden on eorpe, (11.253-54.)

The opening homily occupies the major portion of this section in the French, but, as it is not particularly relevant and does nothing to advance the action, the poet has only summarised it briefly, giving the words of Christ mainly in reported form:-

"I-blessed be ye to day, alle myne leoue children"-
And he tolde hem of his crucifling, how he pe cros soupte,
And of neore fadres bi-fore, pat he fond vn-kuynde-
(11.240-42.)

The promise to Joseph, on the other hand, forms the introduction to an important sequence in which it is fulfilled, and the poet carefully translates the rather ambiguous phrasing of the original at almost equal length.

(257-266 : 173/25-175/3.) In preparation for the sacred office which he is to hold, Joseph is shown a vision of Christ within the ark, surrounded by five angels holding the instruments of the crucifixion. The English version is abbreviated by strict economy of expression: all the significant details of the original are retained, but the prolix description has been pared away. It is in passages such as this that the redactor appears at his best, giving clarity and conciseness to a narrative often obscured by the repetitive, over-labourate style of the French.

175/3-175/18.) The prose version here supplies an explanation

of the crucifixion symbols held by the five angels, but, since their significance is self-evident, the poet ignores the passage completely. (267-276 : 175/15-176/9.) The vision changes, and now Christ is seen stretched upon the cross, blood flowing from his wounds. The redactor, realising that this is a significant episode, retains it at almost equal length and with no changes, other than the verbal alterations necessitated by the versification.

[[: 176/9-177/9.) His care in retaining the passage is, however, completely negated by his omission of the culminating point in the description:-

Et deuous les pids au crucefi vit isels esquies que
 Joseph ses pères avoit fait aporter en l'arce, car li
 estoit avis que li sanc des pids au crucefi degoutoit
 en cele esquies,.... (176/9-12.)

The vision is intended to remind Joseph, -and, incidentally, the reader-, of the true significance of the Grail as the receptacle of the divine blood, and, lacking this detail, it loses most of its value in the poem. The poet could probably rely upon common knowledge of the Grail's origin and associations, but this can scarcely justify his neglect of something so fundamentally important in the story of Joseph of Arimathea, especially when so much that is merely preparatory to it is carefully retained. (277-306 : 177/5-16.) The vision is momentarily interrupted by Joseph, who joins his son in looking into the ark. What follows concerns them both, and the English author, recognising this as a necessary link in the narrative, retains it in the form of a conversational exchange between the two, though much more briefly worded.

(331-364 : 177/14-18.) As the vision is resumed the story approaches a climax in Christ's consecration of Joseph as the first bishop, and the redactor begins to treat his source still more freely, transposing and

rearranging whole sections at will. Passing over, for the moment, some intervening passages, to which he later returns (vide infra, (295-298 : 177/16-178/3.) and (285-294 : 178/6-179/14.)), he translates without abbreviation a few lines in which Christ appears as at His resurrection for the ceremony of Joseph's consecration. By this rearrangement He enters at the head rather than at the end of the ceremonial procession which now begins, and provides a strong contrast with the dying Christ of the preceding passage. Though it is difficult to be sure that this effect was intentional on the part of the poet, there can be no doubt that the result is a decided improvement upon the original.

[(: 179/18-180/13.) The decision to omit a detail connected with the appearance of the risen Christ was also a wise one. At first Joseph does not recognise Jesus until his son prompts him. In the rambling form of the prose this is merely one of many incidents which serve to round out the narrative but have no special significance: to have included it in the abbreviated English version would have unnecessarily interrupted the more swiftly moving action.]

(285-294 : 178/6-179/14 and 182/11-183/15.) Descriptive details of the procession have a more material function in the story. The angels who assemble carry the vessels of the Eucharist as well as the vestments and insignia of priestly authority, sceptre, sword and mitre, each of which has a symbolic function in the ensuing ceremony. Although the English version is very much condensed, most of these articles are mentioned, and the passage gives an adequate impression of the ceremonial assembly. It is only when read in comparison with the French that the haphazard nature of the redaction becomes evident. The material has been selected from two separate portions of a lengthy section, some of the intervening

passages being transferred to another context (vide infra, (313-315 : 160/14-161/2.)) and others completely omitted, with sc little regard for the sequence of the original that features which are there quite unconnected are arbitrarily associated and confused with each other. In the prose description the angel Gabriel appears bearing the Holy Grail (170/26-179/4.), and some pages later there is mention of the rich chair in which the newly-created bishop is seated (183/3-5.). Two lines in the alliterative poem are clearly derived from these disparate sources:-

pen com on, 'pe strenghe of God', Gabriel i-noten,
wip pe riccheeste sege pat euer for seete seemes;
(11.291-92.)

This sort of cobbling can scarcely be due to a deliberate policy of reduction by the combination of related elements: it seems more likely that it is the result of an inattentive reading of the French, especially as the poet fails once more to take up a significant reference to the Grail.

[: 183/15-184/12.) Having mentioned the bishop's throne in which Josaphat is seated, the prose author goes on to give its subsequent history, telling how a Saracen king who tried to sit in it was struck blind. This is typical of the sort of incidental matter which is used to pad out the French narrative. In this instance it may be said to have some material connection with the story, since it stresses the sacred nature of the throne, but its omission by the English poet has no harmful effect on the continuity of the action. Indeed, it is an improvement upon the original, where the digression unnecessarily delays the consecration of Josaphat.]

(295-298 : 177/16-178/3.) Before the actual ceremony takes place the poet returns to translate, in shortened form, a passage which he had earlier passed over. It describes the altar used by Christ as celebrant,

on which are the symbols of the crucifixion and "Pe disch wippe blade" (1.297.). This rearrangement, which is apparently deliberate, allows the introduction of the altar at the moment when its significance is obvious and not, as in the original, long before it is to be used.

(299-301 : 182/23-183/3 and 184/12-185/18.) Joseph is robed and consecrated as the first Christian bishop in a ceremony which the French author describes at some length. By selecting three separate sentences which describe the essential action, and neglecting all the details in which it is elaborated, the poet covers the same ground in three lines. As a result the climax of this part of the story is narrated in sketchy outline, which contrasts oddly with the extent at which the preliminaries have been detailed.

[(: 185/18-191/18.) The degree of abbreviation varies throughout the redaction, and at this point economy seems to have been of particular importance to the poet. In one of his longest excisions he passes over some six pages of Hucher's text where Christ explains to Joseph the significance of his episcopal robes, the outer garment symbolising Chastity, the head-covering Humility, and the staff Vengeance and Mercy combined. This symbolism has considerable importance in the theme of religious mysticism which runs through the Estoire, and, judging by the attention he has given to it, the French author evidently expected that it would interest his audience as much as the more worldly adventures of Joseph and his son. Apparently the English redactor did not share this interest, or was prepared to sacrifice it in order to concentrate upon matter essential to the development of his story.]

(302-304 : 195/22-196/17.) The charge which Christ lays upon Joseph is material of this sort: he must appoint a bishop in every city he visits,

and anoint with holy oil the kings whom he converts. The poet gives the gist of the passage in a few lines, but omits a prophecy that Svalak will shortly become a Christian, since it merely anticipated action which he will later require to narrate in full.

(305-310 : 191/15-192/9.) A similar passage, in which it is explained that Josephus is to be charged with spiritual affairs and his father with temporal matters, is similarly abbreviated. These two sections have been transposed though the sequence of the original is much more suitable: there the direction for the anointing of pagan kings serves as a link with the next episode, a further attempt to convert Svalak.

[: 192/9-195/21.] Between these two passages in the prose there is a long excursus on the Holy Sacrament, which Josephus is taught how to administer and ordered to celebrate daily. Such material has an obvious value in lending interest and authenticity to an apocryphal history of the early Church and the establishment of its institutions, quite apart from any didactic intention on the part of the author. In omitting it the redactor leaves the narrative outline quite unharmed, since no essential part of the plot depends upon it, but he deprives his poem of an important religious element which might have been expected to appeal to an English audience as much as to a French one.]

(311-312 : 196/17-27.) The vision is brought to a close by the command that Josephus should return to the conversion of Svalak. Compressed into a couple of lines this serves the poet as a transition to a new scene and a new episode in the narrative.

[: 196/28-197/11.] In the French romance the action is momentarily delayed while Josephus commits the ark to the care of his cousin Lucan, a character who never appears in the English version. Any detail

connected with the ark and the Grail is of importance, but, where so much of equal significance is ignored, the redactor was unlikely to pause over an incident which interrupts the progress of the narrative.]

(312-315 : 160/14-161/2.) But the policy of omitting everything which does not advance the action is not consistently followed. At this point the poet goes out of his way to include a passage, which he had passed over in its original context, describing the blessing of Evalak's palace with holy water. This seems, at first sight, the sort of non-essential which has been suppressed elsewhere, but here it is used, in combination with a similar detail (vide infra, 316-323 : 160/25-160/13.) to serve a practical purpose.

[I : 161/2-162/11.) In the prose tale this reference to purification serves merely as the introduction to a lengthy discourse by Christ on the use of holy water, and its connection with the office of priesthood. To the contemporary audience this would have the same attraction as the other didactic passages on religious topics with which the Estoire del Saint Grail is liberally supplied, but to the English poet it could only be superfluous, either in its original setting or in the new context where he has placed the initial reference to purification.]

(316-323 : 160/25-160/13.) The point of the reference is to suggest that the pagan palace is the haunt of evil spirits, and the redactor has associated with it another passage from quite a different context which also stresses the rather ominous atmosphere of the place. Daniel, we are told, declared "que cil palais est esprisés" (160/7-8.), and prophesied:

pat hit scholde trewey, in sum tyme aftur,
 Called beo þe palais meruellouse for werkis,
 pat þer scholde beo seyȝen þow sonde of vr lord.
 (11.321-23.)

This is a more definite statement of an idea somewhat vaguely expressed

in the original, and its placing here, at the opening of an episode in which the prophecy is to be fulfilled, suggests an attempt by the redactor to order his material with a definite effect in view.

(324-342 : 197/12-199/4.) The scene is set for a new episode, and Ewalak summons the Christians to continue the debate, sustained on his part by a pagan clerk who denies the doctrine of the Trinity. Feeling himself again on solid ground the English poet translates more directly, with fewer excisions and transpositions, than in dealing with the visionary and didactic passages. But even here minor details have been re-ordered, -for no obvious purpose and without improving the narrative-, others are omitted altogether, and there is the usual economy of expression.

(343-344 : 199/4-9.) Two lines in the English version illustrate the way in which the redactor's efforts to express the original effectively yet briefly often produce something so remote from his source as to constitute an adaptation rather than a translation. When Ewalak's clerk:-

....Sut si durement parlé encontre le dōytet et encontre
le trinitet, si fu Joseph esult esbahis del despendre et
del prouuer encontre ce que chil avoit dit. Si ne sēnt
mie maintenant respondre & fausser ce que chil avoit
dit. Car à nostre seigneur ne plaisoit. (199/4-9.)

The poet, -perhaps influenced by a ready and effective alliteration-, shows Joseph abashed by bad manners rather than by good logic:-

He sprong in his sputison and speek harde wordes,
pat Ioseph hedde no space while his speche laste.
(11.343-44.)

(345-353 : 199/10-200/23.) Joseph comes to his father's assistance, reminding Ewalak of the vision in which he had seen the problems of the faith resolved, and threatening that Pholomar, king of Babylon, who is advancing against his kingdom will be allowed to humiliate him. This is a further step in the development of Joseph as a leading character, demonstrating his powers of prophecy, and, incidentally, stimulating the

reader's interest by hinting at future action in the story. So, although the plot is not directly advanced in this passage, the poet retains it at much the same length as the prose version.

[: 201/1-202/5.) His neglect of what follows is one more illustration of the erratic nature of his redaction. Joseph's prophecy that the pagan clerk will be punished for his attack upon Christian beliefs fulfils precisely the same function as the previous passage. But the poet may well have felt that it could add nothing to the effect of what he had already chosen to include.]

(359-381 : 202/6-205/15.) The fulfilment of this prophecy by the blinding of the clerk is, however, material to the action and is retained, though in shortened form. This incident gives rise to another: Eupalak wishes to know if the clerk will recover and is told to ask his idols, but Appollin(Apollo) can give no answer. The victory of Christ's Followers over the powers of paganism is a recurrent theme throughout the Stoaire, and the English author shows sufficient interest in it to translate passages such as this in some detail. But even here he finds much to omit without loss to the poem: Eupalak enquires once more who Joseph is, admires his learning, and asks if Theodosius will really prove victorious, -a repetition of matter already included in the redaction on its first appearance.

(382-386 : 205/15-206/13.) The repetitive nature of the prose romance may be responsible for the inattention with which the redactor seems to have read it upon occasion. In the French the idols are destroyed by the writhings of an evil spirit exorcised by Joseph, but the English author makes the prophet himself break them to pieces with a stick. The change may be deliberate, but it has no obvious purpose, and similar instances suggest that the poet merely misread or misunderstood his source.

(387-402 : 206/13-207/24.) The episode closes with a passage which is virtually a repetition of what has just passed: Bvalak questions a surviving idol as to whether Tholomey will defeat him, but the god knows nothing of the future and dare not speak before the Christians.

Although this also stresses the weakness of the heathen deities before the disciples of Christ, it might have been expected that the redactor would omit it as he has other duplicate passages less superfluous in effect. Instead, however, he translates it more fully than many narrative sections in which the action is rapidly developed.

(403-440 : 207²⁵-212/12.) A new episode opens with the arrival of a messenger who announces that Tholomey is advancing with a large force, and the king assembles his army to oppose the invader. This is an essential part of the narrative and is retained by the poet in the same form as the original and at almost equal length: the details which he neglects are some of the preparations for war which could safely be left to the imagination of the reader. These preparations are awkwardly interrupted by a lengthy passage in which Josaphat discloses Bvalak's early history, humble birth and fortuitous rise to power, which have been divinely revealed to him. This is a side-issue with little bearing on the story proper, yet it survives at full length in the English version, occupying space quite out of proportion to the general scale of the redaction.

[[: 212/12-213/15] The only justification for the inclusion of Bvalak's life-story is the moral which Josaphat draws from it: that the king should remember his duty to God who raised him from humble origins. But the poet, having retained the narrative in unusual detail, omits the moral, despite its value in the didactic theme of the work. As always,

he seems to be more interested in events than in their significance, moral or otherwise.]

(441-445 : 212/15-215/14.) It was clearly for the sake of the narrative that he retains what follows. Evalak asks for help against his enemies and Joseph shapes a cross of red cloth upon his shield. The making of this talisman is included in the English redaction since it figures prominently later in the story, but the original has been greatly reduced, not only by the economy with which such essentials are described but by the very summary treatment of passages having didactic rather than narrative importance. The king wishes to be told the meaning of the vision he has seen, and, in the French, Joseph replies at length, telling him that he can only understand when he abjures his idols and believes in God, but the poet avoids the issue with:-

"Whon pat pou comest a3eyn, wite pou schalt forsope,
pou mint haue more redi roume my rikenynge to here!"
(11.443-44.)

The topic is not, however, revived again, even where it would be less likely to interrupt the action.

[: 215/15-216/14.) The action is further delayed by reiterated instructions from Joseph as to the circumstances under which Evalak may look to the cross for help, but, as the passage contributes nothing which was not implied in the previous one, the redactor omits it without loss.]

(450-451 : 216/16-18.) The plot moves forward again as Evalak assembles his men, and the poet translates the useful narrative link without alterations.

[: 216/18-220/6.) The army advances to the castle of Evalachin, the description of which occupies three pages of Bucher's text. The contemporary male reader at least would find much to interest him in this, but it is quite incidental to the story and the poet loses nothing

vital by omitting it from his version. By neglecting the remainder of the passage, however, he has deprived the narrative of something essential, —an account of the first assault upon Tholomar,—and made the sequel difficult to understand.]

(452-457 : 220/6-22.) as a result of this indiscriminate omission there is an awkward break in the sequence of the English:-

He arayes his ricne men and rintes nem swipe.

A-non Tholomere's men woxen þe biggore;

Sone beeren hem a-bac and broughten nem to ground; (11451-53)

The reader is told the outcome of the engagement before he knows that it has begun. The next phase of the action is similarly muddled:

Tholomar pursues Evalak and, in his absence, his tents are destroyed by another enemy force, but the poet confuses the two bands and makes Evalak responsible for the raid on the camp. The change may be deliberate, but the erratic nature of the redaction throughout this section suggests that it arose from a mistaken reading of the original.

[(: 220/22-222/27.) The redactor's usual interest in the narrative of events appears to have waned momentarily, and he omits a long passage full of movement and intrigue. A spy discovers where Evalak has taken refuge and Tholomar sets out to attack him. The action, like many of the manoeuvres in the war, is indeterminate, but its absence from the English text deprives what follows of proper motivation.]

(458-471 : 222/27-223/26.) Evalak receives a message from his queen warning him of the impending attack. To a certain extent the redactor takes this passage fulfil the function of the one previously suppressed, and, perhaps for that reason, he translates it with unusual care and fullness. In part the French reads:-

"Divalcoument sot endans que jor faisee el Chelne?" "Sire, dist li vallés, ele en oï hier soir nouvelles?" "Et sée-tu, dist Evalach, qui les nouvelles li dist?" "Par foi, dist-il,

jeu noi sai mie siertaintement, mais jou le vi conseillier
 à un homme que on elaine le ministre des creations.
 Et gant il ot assés conseillet, si ke ele pleroit moult
 tenrement, lors m'apiela, si me coumanda ses lettres à
 aporrier si tost com chis chevaux porroit aller (223/15-21.)

The English version is as close to literal translation as the poet
 comes at any time:-

"He has witered hire of pis and he has hire kenned?"
 He answeres a-non: "Sire, I not forsope.
 Note þe two cristene men þat bydes ow at court,
 In gret counsell han I-beo, I trouwe hit be þe a-boute;"
 (11.400-09.)

[: 223/26-224/14.) The incident of the queen's message was
 obviously intended to give yet another demonstration of the Christians'
 powers of foresight, and to increase the respect which Evalak is beginning
 to feel for them. As the English redaction is more intimately concerned
 with Joseph and his son than the rambling Estaire, which includes so
 many other characters, the poet could not afford to ignore the episode,
 but he seems to have thought it superfluous to demonstrate the accuracy
 of the prophecy, either before (vide supra, (: 220/22-222/27.)) or
 after the event. He accordingly omits a passage in which the escaping
 Evalak is told that Tholomer has begun a siege of the town he has just
 left.]

(472-488 : 224/15-227/2.) In his flight Evalak is met by reinforcements
 sent by his queen, under the command of her brother Seraphe, and by
 letters summoning still more troops. The redactor has transposed two
 passages so that Seraphe and his party appear as though in response to
 the king's message, and in the abbreviated form of the English, where a
 change of topic over few lines would make the sequence jerky and
 incoherent, the change might have been beneficial. But in translating
 the arrival of Seraphe at quite unnecessary length he leaves the

contradictory instructions of the queen to her brother, as well as details of personal relations between the two men which are quite irrelevant even in the original. He compensates by omitting an intermediate section in which the allies retire to a city and lay plans for a new assault. Without this, and similar references omitted elsewhere, the poem lacks any indication of the passage of time, and the whole war appears to occupy only two or three days.

[: 227/2-20.] The strategy of war apparently did not interest the English author: he omits a decision to postpone the assault and wait for the enemy to attack. In this instance the action of the war loses nothing by the omission, though the suppression of a short narrative link, in which Tholomey arrives to renew the battle, makes the situation, when the poet takes up the story again, rather difficult to appreciate. (486-491 : 227/20-228/4.) As the redactor has eliminated the incidental passages describing pauses in the war and the marshalling of forces in cities and castles, the English version reads as though it were one long engagement, a new phase of which now begins. In this instance the absence of any mention of Tholomey's attack makes it seem that the portion of the narrative link translated by the poet refers to the initiation of a fresh assault by Syvalak and his supporters.

[: 228/5-233/10:] The battle begins with a preliminary skirmish described in detail by the prose author, who adds a great deal of miscellaneous information on the size of the two armies, the divisions in which they are arranged, and the age and character of Tholomey. None of this finds a place in Joseph of Arimathea though the poet might have been expected to take an interest at least in the narrative of the engagement. The pages which follow in his source, contain, however, so

many descriptions of combat that to have included all of them would have unbalanced a redaction in which other elements are so greatly abbreviated.]

(492-517 : 233/10-234/24 and 236/15-238/3.) After Svalak has exhorted his knights to do their best, the onslaught begins. The poet translates the battle-field oration in outline, but attributes it to Seraphe! Though the change may be due to error on the part of some Stoaire scribe, the fact that Seraphe is the central figure in the engagement which follows makes it probable that the redactor deliberately substituted his name, as a means of linking the episodes and avoiding an awkward transition in the shortened narrative. His treatment of the battle is even more independent. The French begins mildly with a brief general description of the two armies charging against each other, which in the English version becomes a long and very spirited account of Seraphe's personal prowess:-

Whon Seraphe seiþ þat men, þei miȝte i-seo sone
his polnache go and proude down pallede.
In þe pikkest prea he preuede his wepne,
Breek braynes a-brod, brusede burnes,
Beer bale in his hond, bed nit a-boute.
He hedde an hache vppon heiȝ wip a gret halue,
Huld nit harde wip teis in his two hondes;
So he frusschede hem wip, and fondede his strengþe,
Pat luyte miȝte faren him fro, and to fluiȝt founden.

A few descriptive details and something of the spirit of this passage (11.490-500) may have been derived from references to Seraphe's part in the hand-to-hand fighting which occur here and there throughout the second section indicated, but the English is by no means a translation of any individual passage in the prose version. The source dictated the necessity for a battle scene at this point, suggested the prominence of Seraphe, and the violence of the action:-

Et quant les lances furent péchoiées et li coutel et li faussart et les grans haches trenchans d'acier furent traites, si fu illec si grans li capleil, et la maille fu si mortel, que des espées que des haches et d'autres fileremens dont il feroient sour les lances, et sous les hiaumes, et sour les escus et sour les haubiers, que chon estoit avis que chon estoit une grande merveille de forgerours. Li ot tant membre trenchiées, que il n'est, en cheste siecle, nule langue qui la veritet en püst dire, se chil seulement non, qui tout set et tout counoist, se l'on faisoit sage et chiertain par son esperit.

(236/20-237/5.)

But the poet himself is responsible for the descriptive features.

The result is an extremely forceful and expressive piece of narration, and one of the very few passages in the poem which represent an original contribution on the part of the redactor.

[: 234/24-236/15 and 238/3-239/21.) Apart from the suggestions which he may have derived from the descriptions of Seraphe in action, the poet makes no use of the remainder of this episode. The material which he neglects has religious rather than military significance: Avalak, seeing the efforts of Seraphe in the field, prays Christ to protect him, and he is given such superior strength that his party is only defeated by force of numbers. Although in the Estoire the main function of the war is to demonstrate the power of divine protection, and the English author is later forced to pay attention to this element (vide infra, (555-569 : 254/3-257/11.)) he prefers, wherever possible, to omit it in favour of the material and practical aspects of the battle. (518-519 : 239/21-244/18.) But even the narration of action for its own sake cannot always hold his attention. More than five pages of Hucher's text are given to an adventure of Avalak's seneschal, who, attempting to kill Tholomer, is unhorsed in the midst of the enemy and rescued by Avalak. Of this lively narrative, full of incident and military detail, the poet makes two lines only:-

pe stiward of Eualak in pe stour lafte,
Lai streiht on pe feld, stricken to pe corpe.

(11.518-19.)

They serve well enough as a conclusion to his own general description of the chaos of broken weapons, injured horses, dead and wounded knights, on the battle-field, but convey so little of the episode in the original that the poet may be regarded as having suppressed it altogether, in spite of its similarity to material for which he elsewhere shows a preference.

(520 :) As though conscious that this sort of reduction, with its wholesale omissions and excessive abbreviation, is making nonsense of his original, the poet adds a single line:-

Now Eualak and Tholomer twies han a-semblet; (1.520.)

which has no direct source in the French, but which is apparently intended to summarise the action of the war up to this point. It is too brief to be of much use in the poem, and occurs as an awkward interruption between two passages of narrative, without serving to link them or to mark a period in the development of the story.

(: 244/19-246/10.) The prose author returns to Seraphe, whose supernatural strength continues to amaze the enemy. This is merely a duplication of material which the poet ignored in the context where it first appeared (vide supra, (: 234/24-236/15 and 238/3-239/21.)), and he is sufficiently consistent to make no use of it here.]

(521-541 : 246/10-248/19.) But although the redactor has chosen to eliminate the element of the supernatural, with its theological implications, where it is connected with Seraphe, he follows the French in making him the central figure in the conflict. Tholomer sends his brother Hamtur to attack Seraphe, who retreats with his followers to

a narrow pass and in hand-to-hand fighting kills Samatur. This is a straightforward narrative of action with no supernatural significance, and the poet translates it at some length, though without such of the descriptive detail which the original contains. His treatment of the source is extremely free: he places Sarapha's flight to the pass before Thelemere's order for the attack, and is forced to add two lines of his own invention to explain the purpose of the retreat. It is this type of purposeless alteration which confuses even the simplest of the prose narratives, and robs the poem of any logical sequence of events or continuity of action.

¶ : 248/15-350/17.) The omission of what follows has, however, no harmful effect. Sarapha meets and overcomes another opponent, in a passage which is virtually a repetition of his encounter with Samatur. Episodes of this sort occur so frequently throughout the battle scenes in the Histoire that where, as in this instance, they have no bearing on the basic plot, the poet can afford to economise by suppressing them.⁷ (542-554 : 250/17-254/7.) The elimination of similar duplications helps to make an effective abbreviation of the next episode. The prose romance is crowded with incidents: Sarapha is unhorsed and wounded, recovers and kills an opponent, is wounded again, recovers and looks for Eyalak, finds him on the ground, helps him to mount, and is again separated from him by the enemy. From all this the redactor selects some details only: Sarapha is only once wounded, and, though he searches for Eyalak on the field, he is prevented from reaching him by intervening enemy forces. But despite this process of selection and the omission of whole passages (251/15-252/10; 252/16-253/21, etc.) the various incidents follow each other so rapidly in the shortened poetic form that the transition

from one to another is abrupt and awkward. For example:-

Him wondet þer-wiþ and wemmet so sore,
 þat he was in swounynge and fel to þe grounde.
 Gone þenne he starte vp and streiȝte to his hache,
 Culles on mennes nedes þat þei down lyen, (11.542-45.)

(555-565 : 234/3-257/11.) At this point begins the most important episode in the lengthy battle sequence, and the only one concerned with the theme of divine assistance in war which the English author has chosen to retain. Ewalak is taken prisoner by Tholomer, and, in this extremity, turns to the cross made by Josaphat on his shield, prays for help, and is rescued by the sudden appearance of a mysterious White Knight. Despite its special significance, the scene is dealt with more summarily than many less crucial incidents in the story: the events are only very briefly outlined, without the descriptive fulness of the French version, and there is a fundamental alteration in the content. In the original the White Knight leads Tholomer into Ewalak's camp and there strikes him to the ground, while in the alliterative poem his capture is omitted and he is killed upon the spot. Tholomer makes some incidental appearances later in the French narrative before his death in prison (293/4-8.), but he plays no further part in the plot. In disposing of him directly the poet may merely have wished to avoid those later references, or he may have hoped in this way to give added force to the idea of supernatural intervention on Ewalak's behalf.

(570-605 : 257/12-262/24.) This is the dominant theme so long as the White Knight remains on the scene: when Ewalak returns to the battle he finds Seraphe in difficulties and both have to be rescued by the mysterious knight, who assists them in the fight until the enemy finally retreats. The English version is, as usual, a greatly abbreviated one, in

which whole incidents,—Evalak kills a knight and takes his horse for the dismounted Seraphe,—find no place. But the passages which suggest the divine source of the assistance given to the two leaders are transcribed with some appearance of care. But even here there are the usual errors of detail: the White Knight arms Seraphe with a new battle-axe:—

"Tien, Séraphe, chou t'envoie li vrais crucefin", et quant il l'eut prié, si senti que ele estoit plus légère de celui que il avoit toute jour portée; par çou sent-il bien que chou n'estoit pas la soie. (259/21-24.)

but the poet, failing to appreciate the significance of the weapon's unusual lightness, takes it:—

....pe heulor bi fer pen he bi-foren hedde; (1.592.)

Towards the end of the section, in dealing with the retreat of Tholomer's forces, led by his steward, he abbreviates so excessively and so carelessly that it is impossible to understand his redaction without reference to the French source.

[: 262/25-264/5.) By this point the redactor had apparently grown tired of the battle. Having compressed the account of the enemy's last stand to the point at which it becomes incomprehensible, he omits altogether the French description of the final slaughter and the fate of Tholomer's steward. As a result his narrative of the war tails away inconclusively, and a fresh topic is abruptly introduced.]

(606-614 : 284/20-286/21.) The awkwardness of the transition is, however, less irritating than it might have proved had the poet merely continued to follow the sequence of the French. There the White Knight vanishes after the battle and Evalak urges Seraphe to return with him to court. The redaction gives the essential features of the narrative, though in a much more direct way than the leisurely prose, turning reported speech into dialogue, and ignoring descriptive details altogether. The treatment

of the passage is, however, less important than its placing at this point. In the Histoire a complete episode at the court of Svalak intervenes, occupying some twenty pages of Uucher's text, and postponing the end of the war until long after it has ceased to be material to the plot.

By transposing the two passages the poet produces a much more satisfactory sequence of events, disposing of the White Knight as soon as his function is at an end, preparing for the return of Svalak and Saraghe to court, where they appear immediately after the interlude, and recalling the role played by the Christians who again become the central figures in the action. The result is one of the most successful transitions in the poem, and perhaps the best attempt by the redactor to remodel his source creatively and with a definite effect in view.

(515-562 : 264/6-272/16.) The English author now returns to the sequence of the French, having prepared a suitable introduction for the scene that follows. In the court at Sarraz, Josapha discovers by conversation with the queen that she has already been converted to Christianity. The episode has, of course, an integral connection with the unifying theme in the part of the Histoire utilised by the redactor,—the conversion of Svalak and his people,—and he translates it with some care. Throughout, the name 'Joseph' is substituted for 'Josapha': this may be an attempt to concentrate attention upon the better-known figure, the hero of the poem in so far as it has one, rather than upon his son, who, in the French, tends to usurp the leading role,—or it may be a simple error due to the similarity of the names. With this exception the English version follows closely the general outline of the French, and includes some rather ingenious details which might, perhaps, have been omitted: the queen's mother was converted by a hermit who cured her of a disease, and when the

queen is asked if she too will believe in Christ, she thinks that it is the hermit who is referred to:-

And I wepte water warm and wette my wonges,
And beside his bert was her, I had not on his leane
(11.647-48.)

But, although the poet has taken the trouble to include such incidents of human interest, his translation gives only a portion of the matter in his source. The abbreviation is achieved not only by the elimination of all the minor narrative links:-

Et chil qui avoec lui estoient si se prisent par la
main, si se monerent devant l'ernite, et quant j'en fui
devant lui, si me dist amiable:.....Et li bons
hom commença à rire de chon que j'en avoie dit de
lui, et il me dist:.....Et tantost començai j'en
di chon dit, si se respondi li hermites:.....
(269-270.)

with which the prose is liberally padded, but by omitting long sections of didactic material, as the meaning of baptism (265/13-18.) and the life of Christ (271/16-23.). Here, as elsewhere, the English author shows a preference for the narration of events rather than for instructive homilies, even where the instruction is relevant to his subject.

[I : 272/16-283/4.) But his interest in adventure for its own sake is limited, and he is usually very ready to omit anything which does not serve a necessary function in the story. By far the greater part of the queen's narrative has left no trace in his redaction. It is a diffuse and rambling story: her mother, when dying, sent her to the hermit with a box in which he placed the Sacrament, and on her way back she met "un home qui touz estoit vestus de robe noire" (279/7-8.) who asked her to return with him and bury the hermit who had since died; she did so and her attendants were converted by the stranger. It is difficult to see any significance in all this, and the redactor most probably ignored it because he thought it could add nothing to the plot which is not

already implied by the first part of the queen's story.]

(663-667 : 283/5-284/20.) The relation of this long interlude to the main narrative is pointed by the incident with which it ends:-

quant Josephe fut ascoutée sa parole de chief au chief,
 se dist: "Dame, comment, puisque vous avez raché la
 créanche Jhésu-Crist, porcoi ne vous contentés dont
 come un loiaus cambrière, pour quoi n'avez-vous
 pieché le roy vostre seigneur getés de ceste grant
 ordure & il a tant gâté?" (283/5-10.)

With characteristic brevity the English author translates:-

"Whi hastou let so longe þi lord þis lyf leden?"
 (1.663.)

The queen's answer, - that Eyalak is too head-strong to be converted by her, is included as a means of heightening Joseph's success in the matter shortly afterwards, but her anxiety for the king's safety and the prophet's reassurance are omitted.

(668-677 : 286/21-288/18.) This prepares the way for the final scene in Joseph of Arimathea, which, due to the redactor's skilful rearrangement of episodes (vide supra, (606-614 : 254/20-286/21.)) begins directly, with the arrival of Eyalak and Seraphe from the battle-field. The king sends for the Christians and praises Joseph (here, again, the redactor has substituted Joseph's name) as a true prophet, explaining to Seraphe the source of the aid they had received in the war. The chief function of this passage in the French version is to inform Seraphe of Christian beliefs, in preparation for his conversion, but the English author, unwilling to repeat a process which he followed at length in the case of Eyalak, omits the didactic matter completely.

(678-681 : 288/18-291/1.) Seraphe's conversion is aided by two miracles which follow each other in quick succession: Christ is seen stretched upon the red cross of Eyalak's shield, and a man who has lost an arm is cured by touching it. This type of incident clearly appealed to the

redactor as an alternative to the homily previously omitted, and he briefly retains the miracle of healing, while, by selecting a line here and there, he avoids all mention of the vision of Christ associated with it,--perhaps because a similar vision had already featured in his poem (vide supra, (267-276 : 175/18-176/5.))

(582-699 : 291/3-294/16.) Seraphe is now convinced and is baptized as a Christian, together with the newly-healed knight, king Eyalak, and some thousands of his people. This is the climax of an important episode in the Satoire and the culminating scene of Joseph of Arimathea, but the French account is relatively brief, and the English author follows his usual practice in reducing it to still more slender proportions. The result is a concise outline of the original, retaining the essential facts, but omitting material which contributes to the didactic theme of the prose work rather than to the plot,--Seraphe's sermon to Eyalak urging him to accept baptism also (292/18-293/8.) The confusion of names still persists: in the original the whole ceremony of baptism is conducted by Joseph, but in the English version Joseph baptizes Seraphe, Eyalak and the wounded knight, while his son officiates for the populace. The function is obviously more in keeping with Joseph's office as bishop, but it is probable that, here as elsewhere, the alteration is accidental and has no significance in the scheme of the redaction.

(700-703 : 294/17-27.) It is possible, however, that the confusion originated in the prose version. In Hucher's text Joseph leaves Sarras to carry the faith elsewhere and Joseph remains behind to consecrate the heathen temples, but in the manuscript edited by Sommer it is Joseph⁽¹⁾ who leaves the city and Joseph who stays behind. The redactor apparently

1) Op.cit., p.75.

used as Estoire text which agreed with the latter in this particular.

The passage is a short narrative link, introducing the next in the long series of adventures which compose the French romance, but with which the English work does not deal. To all intents and purposes the poem is at an end, and the few lines which follow 1.699 detract from, rather than add to, the general effect.

(1)
(704-707 : III, 169/26-189/25.) At this point the redactor inserts a summary, in four lines, of an incident which occurs very much later in the Estoire. It is one of the many adventures of Eyalak (now known by his baptismal name of Mordreine) who rescues Joseph and his son from imprisonment by the king of Bergales. The insertion is interesting for the light it throws on the poet's methods and his intentions in making the redaction, but, as the reader is to hear nothing further of the incident, the account is both unsatisfactory in itself and most awkwardly placed.
(708-709 : II, 4/27-395/6.) It interrupts the narrative of the Christians' preparations for their departure from Barbas, which the redactor, unwisely, has chosen to include. Although the lines concern the safe-keeping of the Holy Grail, they are relevant to future action rather than to the episode contained in the English work, and they end the poem lamely and inconclusively:-

Sipen pel bi-tauften pe blod twel barnes to holden,
And pel lenden of pe toun and leuen nit pers.
(II. 708-9.)

There is nothing to suggest that the manuscript of Joseph of Arimathe is incomplete, and there can be little doubt that the poet
(2)
deliberately ended his redaction at this point. Though the conversion

1) H.B.: The reference here is to the third volume of Huchey's edition.

2) See W.W. Skeat, op.cit., p. 66.

of Jvalak and Seraphe is only the first of many misadventures undertaken by Joseph and his son, it has a certain unity as a separate incident. Even the abbreviated version contains details which link it with later episodes in the Histoire, but it is complete in itself at the point where the redaction ends. It may well be, however, that the incident was not originally selected as the only one to be translated, and that the decision to go no further with the work was made abruptly at this point. The indecisive way in which the poem ends, and the inclusion of details which belong properly to the next episode, suggest some hesitation on the part of the poet. His rather pointless reference in ll. 704-7 to a much later part of the story may indicate that, growing tired of his project, he leafed through the French manuscript and noted the future adventures of Joseph and Josephine, but decided to go no further with the redaction.

At the point where he broke off, the English poet had made use of something between a quarter and a third of the Histoire del Saint Graal. The fact that he stopped at a moment when Joseph and his son
(1)
pass out of the story for some hundreds of pages, may explain why he lost interest in the prose narrative, since his reference to their later adventures makes it clear that his chief concern was with them rather than with their converts. But although the characters whose biblical associations make them of major importance are absent through much of the remainder, the French narrative continues as before, unaltered in the nature of its contents or the manner of its story-telling. As in the earlier scenes, the incidents follow each other rapidly, loosely strung together, and, at the best, very vaguely linked to the general theme.

1) They do not reappear until Vol. III, p. 126 of Leach's edition.

Mordecai (formerly Elyakim) is snatched away from his kingdom by the
 Holy Ghost, and isolated on a rock in the ocean, where he is successively
 comforted by a handsome man in a boat bearing the red cross upon its
 mast, and tempted by a beautiful woman in a black-cloaked ship, the one
 representing his new faith, the other his old one. Joseph, now known
 as Eusebius, is similarly carried off, but after many adventures, wandering
 about the sea on mysterious, unnamed ships, he encounters Mordecai and
 they return together to Tarras. Eusebius, however, sets out again to
 search for his son, Galadain, who in looking for his father has also been
 isolated on an island. The story returns abruptly to the head of
 Christians, who, under Joseph's leadership, cross the ocean on Joseph's
 ship, in order to spread the faith in Britain, where Eusebius later joins
 them. There follows a long series of incidents associated with Joseph
 and his son, sometimes together, at others individually,--their conversion
 of pagan kings, the birth of Galadain, their imprisonment by the king of
 Morgales and the arrival of Mordecai to the rescue, the baptism of an
 invading horde of Saracens. After numerous adventures and the passage
 of many years, the narrative ends with the crowning of Galadain as king
 of Wales, the foretelling of events concerning his famous descendants, and
 the deaths of Joseph and Eusebius.

A summary sketch, however, gives any adequate impression of
 the Legende du Saint Grail, since it is not a clear-cut, straightforward
 narrative, but rather an extended series of incidents whose association
 in the work is largely fortuitous. The main concern of the author is
 with Joseph, Eusebius and their first converts from paganism, but on the
 slightest excuse he turns aside to quite unrelated events--messengers
 searching for Eusebius are shipwrecked on an island where they discover

the ruined palace and tomb of Hippocrates, whose life history, rise to fame by healing Augustus Caesar's nephew, disgrace in an adventure with a lady, departure for Galilee to visit Christ, revival of the son of a Persian king believed dead, marriage to a princess, and death by poisoning at her hands, occupies almost fifty pages in Bucher's text. The romance unfolds like a Chinese puzzle, each incident containing another within it. The interpolated material which so frequently interrupts the main action is either, as in this instance, a narrative of adventure told for its own sake, or the homiletic treatment of religious topics, paraphrases of biblical matter, with an obvious didactic intent:— the story of Adam and Eve and the tree of life, the birth of their children, and the murder of Abel by Cain, only vaguely connected with the story proper, fills some thirteen pages, while the moral of Pompey's downfall as the result of having stabled his horses in the temple at Jerusalem accounts for a further fourteen. ⁽¹⁾

The numerous interpolations of this sort are irrelevant only in that they have little or no bearing upon the main thread of the narrative and do not concern the chief characters in the action. But, far from being extraneous, they typify the two elements which, singly and in combination, underlie the very diverse components of the plot throughout the Histoire del Saint Graal: adventures, largely, though not exclusively, of a military nature, or dealing with characters who represent the feudal chiefs of contemporary society, and religious matter, varied in type, but with a common expository or didactic intent. This conjunction of apparently disparate themes is not confined to the Histoire alone, but ⁽²⁾

1) Op.cit., Vol.III, pp.26-73.

2) Ibid., Vol.II, pp.453-66 and Vol.II, pp.330-51.

constitutes the distinctive characteristic of the Vulgate Cycle and
 (1)
 the Grail romances as a whole. In every case the basic elements are
 those of the normal romance: "Les traditions courtoises y subsistent
 avec leurs principaux caractères, sans en exclure cet amour insatiable
 (2)
 qui servent uniquement les héros de Chrétien" - though in the Histoire
 courtly love is noticeably absent, and it is the secondary figures, rather
 than Joseph and his son, who represent the aristocratic heroes of the
roman courtois. "Mais le grand courant religieux et mystique du
 XIII^e siècle est venu balayer ces miasmes et leur assigner de strictes
 limites, et voici que s'appesant aux pernicieuses indulgences de la morale
 courtoise l'austère garantie de la foi. Allégories mystiques, pieux
 symboles maintenant partout présente la pensée du Seigneur; les
 exploits chevaleresques ne se justifient qu'avec un idéal religieux et
 moral; l'objet de la chevalerie c'est la défense de sainte Eglise, la
 protection des faibles et des opprimés; le chevalier vaudra par ses
 vertus chrétiennes, car 'vins ne fait le prodehomme ne li cuers non' (3)
 There can be little doubt that this association of chivalry with religion
 was deliberately designed to glorify knighthood by demonstrating its
 virtues in an important field not previously exploited by the romances, (4)
 and that it was approved by the aristocratic tastes of the audience. (5)

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- 1) "Les romans du Graal offrent cette complexité d'être à la fois des romans de chevalerie et des romans religieux" (J. Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie" Rom., LXXV, Paris, 1954, p. 163).
 - 2) H. Boscq, Le Moyen Âge, (Histoire de la littérature française, (ed. 1928) Vol. I, Paris, 1931, p. 111.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 111.
 - 4) See J. Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie" loc cit., p. 163 et seq.
 - 5) V. L., "Les magnifiques manuscrits cycliques du Lancelot-Graal, datés du XIV^e et du XV^e siècle, nous ont été transmis, comme l'ensemble de la tradition manuscrite des romans du Graal, par les bibliothèques des grands seigneurs, et non par celles des monastères" (Ibid., p. 166.)

The Esteire, in comparison with other branches of the Vulgate Cycle, does not demonstrate the full degree of this synthesis. The sacred associations of Joseph of Arimathea and Joseph's holy office make it impossible for the leading characters to take the field as armed knights in defence of the faith, though they skirmish with the pagans upon occasion. But the role played by such a spiritual champion as the White Knight links the romance with the tradition (1) which produced Galahad ("le Messie de la chevalerie mystique, 'celestielle'") and the other knights of the Grail. The same tradition is reflected in the freedom with which the adventures of Massions and Bertrains, -knights errant after their conversion-, are interspersed with religious matter in didactic form, with lengthy interpretations of mythic allegories, and detailed analyses of sacred symbols. But here a secondary influence is involved, of major importance in the period and not confined to the Grail romances alone. "Le XIII^e S., plus encore que le XII^e, est l'âge du symbole. Mais on traite celui-ci comme s'il n'était plus compris instinctivement, on en accentue l'expression, on le commente..." (2) "Dans la littérature polémique s'introduit ainsi un style pseudo apocalyptique, et, dans le roman et les ouvrages édifiants, une allegorie systématique, incluant sa propre glose." The Esteire, more, perhaps, than any other part of the Vulgate Cycle, displays the contemporary love of exposition, the pleasure taken in explaining the most obvious symbolism and in repeating the most familiar biblical episodes, with a freedom, -made possible by the prose

1) J. Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie", loc cit., p. 206.

2) P. Guiraud, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1954, pp. 230-31.

(1)

medium-, which is responsible for the great length of the work,

This intermixture of the two elements of religious exposition and adventure narrative constitutes, therefore, the chief characteristic of the French work on which the alliterative poet chose to base his composition. His treatment of these two elements indicates more clearly than anything else what it was that attracted him in the Estoire, what his intentions were in making the redaction, and for what sort of audience he believed himself to be working. The fact that narrative incident and religious homily are not perfectly integrated in his source, allows the poet to discriminate between them in selecting the material for his greatly abbreviated version. Since much of the religious matter is merely a commentary upon, or an explanation of, details in the plot, it has, for practical reasons, less claim upon the redactor's attention than narrative which advances the action. His omission of the Estoire's explanation of the crucifixion symbols(: 175/3-18.), the sermon on the significance of holy water(: 181/2-182/11.), the obscuroly detailed symbolic interpretation of the episcopal robes(: 185/18-191/15.) and the instructions to Joseph on the celebration of Holy Sacrament(: 194/9-195/21.) can be explained on grounds of economy.

But even where the religious element has a practical function to play, - notably in preparing for the conversion of Avalak-, the poet readily omits much which might be considered vital to his redaction. So, although he patiently translates the first half of Joseph's sermon on the life of Christ(73-101 : 135/9-136/13.), he breaks off abruptly,

1) Another(op.cit., p. 235) comments on the relation between the prose medium and the development of symbolism: -"Moins brèves, les auteurs devaient plus prolifiques, mais aussi plus subtils, cultivent le symbole complexe et le sous-entendu."

leaving some pages of identical material unused(: 138/14-140/12.) His treatment of Ewald's vision(175-184 : 155/11-156/14 and 187-211 : 158/11-162/17.)is only a partial one,and the pages which are omitted (: 156/15-158/11.)deprive the incident of much of its significance. The poet himself seems to have been conscious that his version was obscure and he attempts to replace the missing material by inserting, on his own initiative, a direct explanation of the vision(155-156 :). There is, however, no similar attempt to clarify the theological argument by which Joseph seeks to convince the king, much of which is omitted altogether(: 145/18-151/11.)and the remainder(137-150 : 151/12-152/3.)so garbled as to lose much of its meaning. The inadequacy of the translation here, as elsewhere, suggests that the English author's attention is not closely engaged, that he has read the didactic passages in the original with so little interest as to be incapable of making effective use of the material which he nonetheless feels obliged to incorporate in his redaction.

Even where religious matter has been integrated with a narrative of adventures,--some of them essential to the story proper, others merely incidental to it but interesting in themselves--, he omits both elements together. He makes no use, for example, of the cautionary tale concerning the bishop's throne on which a pagan king tried to sit (: 163/15-164/12.), or of the divine instructions for the guidance of Joseph and his followers(: 166/14-167/9.). Or, again, he may retain an interesting story but ignore the lesson associated with it, giving Ewald's early life-history(401-440 : 167/25-212/12.)but omitting the moral which Joseph draws from it(: 212/12-213/19.), making use of the pages which describe Seraph in action on the battle-field

(498-517 : 236/15-238/3.) but ignoring the prayers which are offered on his behalf(: 234/24-235/15 and 238/3-239/21.).

In general, then, the redactor favours narrative incident at the expense of the religious and didactic elements in his source. But his attitude is not consistent: Joseph's prayer for help in converting Svalek is, unexpectedly, retained at length(212-229 : 162/18-166/14.) and in a version which concentrates on the biblical precedents cited by Joseph rather than on the practical plea for assistance. And again, an episode of religious significance, demonstrating the fallibility of heathen gods, is duplicated unnecessarily and in considerable detail (387-402 : 206/13-207/24.), despite the economy reflected in the general conduct of the redaction.

On the other hand economy is occasionally, though more rarely, effected by the neglect of narrative incident. The long account of her past given by Svalek's queen is only touched upon in the English version (615-662 : 264/5-272/16.) and the greater part of her history is ignored (: 272/16-283/4.), though there seems no reasonable explanation for this discrimination, other than a lack of interest on the part of the poet. A similar lack of interest is presumably responsible for the reduction of a long, lively incident in the battle to a couple of lines in the English poem(518-519 : 239/21-244/16.) and for the complete omission of another military adventure involving one of the chief characters in the story(245/19-250/17.).

This, again, is in direct contrast to the poet's obvious interest in the description of combat, an interest which is responsible for the most original passage in the poem(11.498-517), one which, though it fulfils the same function as its French counterpart, shows an

independence in descriptive detail which is as close as the poet ever comes to creative composition:-

pere weore stedes to straien, stoares to medien,
Meeten miȝtful men, mellen þorw scheldes,
Harde hauberkes to-borsten and þe breast þurleden,
Sænon sænere vpon schaft schalkene blode.
þo þat nouen vpon hors heowen on helmes.
þo þat hulden hem on fote hakken þorw scholdres.
Mony swouȝninge lay þorw schindringe of scharpe,
And starf aftur þe ðep in a schort while.
þer weoren hedes vn-huled, helmes vponaunset;
Harde scheldes to-clouen, on quarters fellen,
Slen hors and mon holliche at enes.

(ll.507-17.)

This is almost the only instance in the whole work where the alliterative medium is used with real effect and the verse momentarily takes on the quality of poetry. The choice of medium, the decision to translate French prose into English verse, probably owes little or nothing to poetic feeling, or a sense of poetic ability in the redactor, but to considerations of native taste and literary fashion. When Joseph of Arimathe was translated in the mid-fourteenth century, the taste for romances composed or recast in prose, already widespread in France, had not yet begun to influence English literature. In choosing an alliterative verse form the West Midland poet was merely following the dominant literary practice of his dialect area. Whether or not the choice was a wise one is doubtful. Most of the topics with which the Estoire is concerned are not well suited to the alliterative line, and the best that can be said for the English verse is that it conveys the meaning of the original adequately, except in a few passages where excessive compression has caused obscurities, and that it is less distorted by the demands of alliteration than some of the contemporary poetry in the same medium.

The positive virtues of alliterative verse, forceful rhythm

and the reiterated crash of linked syllables, appear in this short description of combat, and, to a lesser extent, in a few scattered lines on the same type of scene. (1) If the quality of the verse as well as the originality of the redaction at this point indicates a personal interest on the part of the poet, then it is obvious that his interest is extremely limited in range. It is confined to active scenes of battle and does not extend to associated topics, such as the strategy of war: passages dealing with this are omitted to a degree which occasionally confuses (2) the sequence of events in the English version. And even within these narrow limits the interest is not consistently maintained: within the portion of the Histoire covered by the English redaction many similar passages are skimped in translation or omitted altogether, and some of the later, unutilized episodes in the prose might have been expected to appeal particularly to the poet on this ground. But such inconsistency is typical of the redaction as a whole. It is possible to detect a general principle of selection and rejection,--one which favours the narrative at the expense of the didactic element in the Histoire-, but the principle is not adhered to in any thorough-going way. Some of the homiletic and religious passages are retained at the expense of narrative incident, even to the injury of the story outline in the English version.

The inconsistency which characterizes the content of the poem is also apparent in the manner in which the redaction is carried out. Just as the poet failed to follow any clear-cut policy in separating

1) A further description of Seraphe in action, ll. 531-34, and some individual lines in the scene between him and the White Knight, ll. 584-600, show something of the same spirit.

2) For example: (: 216/18-220/6.), (: 220/22-222/27.), (: 227/2-20) and (: 262/25-264/5.).

narrative from homily, so he apparently lacked any concrete guiding principles for the conduct of the redaction. His sole resolve seems to have been that his version should be a radical abbreviation of the prose. But his methods of abbreviation are often haphazard and erratic.

It must be admitted that as a subject for abbreviation the Estoire del Saint Graal presents many difficulties. No straightforward story-line emerges from the episodic romance in its slow-moving, discursive prose form. At times the poet appears to be trying to carve out a narrative sequence of his own by a very liberal adaptation, but he is repeatedly tempted to include irrelevant incidents which distract from the main thread of the narrative and confuse the redactor no less than his readers. Yet the evidence of his efforts to carry out his artistic function conscientiously is too obvious to be dismissed as unplanned or accidental. His attempts to adapt the narrative sequence in keeping with the greatly reduced scale of his poem, by transposing and rearranging passages over a wide area, must have been deliberately conceived with a particular effect in view. These structural alterations are, in general, designed to tighten and strengthen the plot, by bringing together incidents which are interdependent, and displacing or eliminating matter which, in the original, constitutes a deviation or interruption. Where the redactor is fully in control of his material the result is often a decided improvement upon the French version: the sequence from 1.313 to 1.323, involving the combination of two passages widely separated in the prose text, (313-315 : 180/14-181/2.) and (316-323 : 168/25-169/13.), and the removal of didactic material which is an unnecessary interruption in the new sequence, (: 181/4-182/11.), is a case in point. But his

1) Similarly, the passage 11.251-312 involves a complex combination of

attempts at large-scale rearrangement of the sequence of episodes are not always successful: in 11.472-88, for example, the sound idea of illustrating the motivation of an event by associating it closely with related events is spoilt by the retention of contradictory material, (1) which might easily have been omitted.

In some instances the transposition of passages is so clumsy and results in so much muddle as to suggest that the particular (2) alteration is not intentional but accidental. Such confusions may indicate that the poet often read his source in lengthy extracts, and, in retelling the passage without further reference to the French text, wrongly remembered the sequence of events. This occasionally results in an improved grouping of incidents within the immediate context, but often spoils the total effect by neglecting or displacing a detail essential to what follows. This type of independent redaction, without close and constant reference to the original, may also be responsible for the numerous factual errors in the English version, ranging from the confusion of 'Joseph' and 'Josaphat' (11.668-77 and passim), and the substitution of one character for another (11.492-517), to minor changes in the story itself (11.382-86). If, as some of the variants between the redaction and its original suggest, -for example, 11.26-37 and 11.52-56, -the poet's knowledge of French was imperfect, the frequency of such errors is all the more understandable. (3)

(Cont.) widely separated sections, displacement of others and omission of whole pages in the original, while 11.38-56 bring together several divine commands given in two distinct visions awkwardly divided from each other in the Estoire. Other successful rearrangements include 11.295-98 and 11.606-14.

1) A similar failure is represented by 11.75-104.

2) See, for example, 11.7-11 and 11.12-20.

3) Our ignorance of the precise form of the Estoire used by the English

The major alterations in the narrative outline indicate a somewhat cavalier attitude on the part of the redactor towards his source, just as the minor errors suggest a rather cursory reading and a lack of attention to detail. Both show, however, that the English author, whatever his shortcomings, was not content to borrow subserviently from the French, translating faithfully line by line, but approached his material independently, with the intention of reshaping and moulding it to his own ends. He is clearly quite uninhibited by anything connected with the original, the reputation of the author or the fame of the work, -if, indeed, he was aware of either. Independence is reflected in the freedom with which he applies his various methods of redaction throughout.

The minor methods of procedure, like the major, are largely designed to compress the expansive prose narrative into some eight hundred alliterative long lines. The policy of abbreviation, as distinct from rearrangement, takes several forms and is applied with varying degrees of success. The omission of whole scenes and episodes, quite apart from general discrimination between the two basic elements in the Estoire and the elimination of material to facilitate the regrouping of episodes, accounts for much of the difference in bulk between the French and English versions. The readiness of the audience for whom the Vulgate Cycle was compiled to accept interpolated incidents, however loosely connected with the main narrative, provided ample opportunity for this sort of excision. So the poet could omit the excursus on the punishment of Caiaphas (: 116/8-119/9.), the description of the building of the ark for the Grail (: 127/23-128/11.), and the incident through

(Cont.) author makes it impossible to be certain that many of the apparent errors originated with him, but the consensus of evidence is sufficient to support a general charge of carelessness in the conduct of the redaction.

which Vespasian's conversion to Christianity is revealed(121/18-123/8.),without harming the essential fabric of the story. Here and there,however,essential incidents are passed over in the attempt to cut down the scale of the narrative. Failure to mention the Grail in a vision of the crucifixion(: 176/9-177/9.),for example,robs the whole scene of its point and weakens the significance of other details faithfully included.

The process of elimination employed on a smaller scale to separate important from non-essential details within individual scenes, though equally well-intentioned,is all too often unfortunate in result. The opening lines of the redaction(11.1-6)provide a good example of the poet carefully at work,selecting only those items of fact and descriptive detail which are vital to the understanding of the story. Elsewhere he is less meticulous and the redaction suffers through the omission of essentials: even such a slight slip as the failure to name Ewald when he first appears(11.57-64)causes confusion in the English version,while, -more seriously-,the absence of the details which explain the revolt of his barons reacts adversely upon much that follows.

The injury done to the meaning of the poem by excessive abbreviation is aggravated rather than counteracted by the retention of details or incidents which are unimportant or even meaningless in their context. The warning to Joseph and his followers not to return to Jerusalem(11.21-25)loses most of its significance by omission of the purpose behind it,while the carefully translated passage on the engendering of Galahad(11.230-33)could only be significant in a redaction which covered the Estoire as a whole. These and similar survivals represent topics in the original which attracted the redactor's interest for

reasons other than their function in the narrative, or which he included merely through oversight and without a function purpose in view. They provide further examples of that inconsistency which is evident throughout the redaction.

In this respect the expression and style of translation employed are one with the rest of the work. There is an obvious effort on the part of the poet to economize even in the phrasing of his English version, by compressing description, stating facts directly, and pruning all repetitive material severely. The wordiness of the French prose offers ample opportunity for such economy in expression, and in many passages the narrative gains greatly as a result. ⁽¹⁾ But with his usual inconsistency the redactor all too often falls into an almost literal, line by line translation of the French, largely unaffected by the restraint ⁽²⁾ in expression usually exercised by the alliterative line. Then, apparently becoming aware of too great a dependence upon the original, or bored by the duties of a translator, he returns abruptly to a free and sketchy paraphrase of the prose. The result is an odd jumble of styles, ranging from laboured passages which almost equal the loquacity of the French, to rapid transitions abbreviated to the point of incoherence. The erratic effect is increased by the fact that the expression is quite unrelated to the importance of the matter dealt with: an essential feature may be skimped in translation, while an incident which might without harm have been omitted altogether is faithfully and fully rendered.

This irrational style, changing by fits and starts without apparent reason, typifies the redaction as a whole: the matter, like the

1) See, for example, 11.65-74, 11.109-136, 11.169-174, and 11.257-266.

2) See, for example, 11.75-101, 11.367-402, 11.463-440, and 11.458-471.

expression, is inconsistently handled and to a large extent uncontrolled. Yet clearly the poet was not content to accept the material of the Estoire uncritically, and the evidence of his attempts to control and reshape it is apparent from even the most summary comparison of the two versions. The faults of Joseph of Arimathea spring from his failure to carry his policy of radical abbreviation into effect throughout the work, and to a more or less uniform degree within it. "The matter is so loosely and episodically assembled that the romance has little formal (1) unity;—a failing which is partly inherent in the original, but which is aggravated by varied and unsustained attempts to shape a clear story-line from a wealth of incident, inconsistency in separating the two basic elements in the Estoire from each other, an uneven and erratic conduct of the narrative and an equally uncontrolled and jerky style.

This lack of consistency and control, the fundamental failing of the redaction, is much less obvious in reading the poem alone than in comparing it closely with the Estoire del Saint Graal, when the possibilities of success for the poet's principle of abbreviation are more evident and the extent of his failure is, therefore, more apparent. Some readers of the poem consequently find "compensation for this fault of structure in the author's successful communication of his imaginative apprehension of his subject" (2) "The battle pieces evince extraordinary power; they are delineated with laconic vigor, with realistic detail, in phrasing often strikingly suggestive and picturesque. The poet wrote them with his imagination active, and with his ears ringing with Biblical accounts of warfare rather than with the narrative of the romances" (3) The battle

1) G. Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p. 26.

2) Ibid., p. 26.

3) Wells, Manual, pp. 76-77.

poet's art,--and they are more limited than Wells means to suggest,-- there is little in the redaction to indicate that the poet's imagination was actively excited by his subject, and even in the scenes of combat it may have been the opportunity to use the alliterative line effectively which roused him to originality rather than biblical fervour, since he discriminates against the religious element throughout his reworking of the Estoire. He was certainly not content to be a hack translator, but, even by the standards which can properly be applied to the common Medieval rehandling of other men's material, his work on the Estoire could scarcely be regarded as a creative process, involving imaginative interpretation or recreation of the original. At the best he is an original artist in intention only, a craftsman by fits and starts, and a poet still more sporadically.

The originality of his approach to the French source indicates, more clearly than anything else, his intention in making the redaction and the sort of audience for whom he proposed to cater. Much of the attention paid to Joseph of Arimathea by literary historians is due to the fact that in it the Grail makes its first appearance in Middle English literature, much earlier than in any of the other versions now surviving. (1) Yet the poem as it stands is scarcely a Grail story at all: the Grail itself figures only incidentally in the narrative, several of the most important references to it are omitted, and there is nothing whatsoever to suggest that the poet appreciated its significance. Had

1) See, C. P. Farrar and A. F. Evans, Bibliography of English Translations from Medieval Sources, (Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies, No. XXXIX), New York, 1946, p. 210. The only other known version before Malory, dating from about 1450, is by Henry Lovelich and was also taken from the Estoire del Saint Graal: ed. F. J. Furnivall, Lovelich's History of the Holy Grail, N.E.S.S., E. 3., 20, 24, 28, 30 and 95.

he been interested in the Grail legend, or attracted to the Estoire as the source of material which he knew to have a particular appeal for his audience, he would surely have completed the redaction, or at least continued it as far as the British scenes with their peculiar religious significance for native readers. If the Grail had been the real subject of his interest or theirs his abbreviation would have been designed to follow the thread of the narrative in which it is directly concerned, neglecting the adventures of Bwalak and Serapha, but covering the whole scope of the Estoire and, in particular, the later scenes upon the conversion of Britain.

Even though the redactor may have begun with the intention of giving such a complete version of the Estoire, his interest apparently waned as he read further in his source. The evidence clearly points to a breaking-off at a convenient point in the story, rather than to the deliberate proselection of a self-contained episode. And even within the chosen section the neglect of certain elements suggests that the poet either did not understand, or did not expect his audience to appreciate the distinctive mingling of apparently disparate features which characterises the Estoire del Saint Graal and the Grail romances as a whole. Though, as always, his treatment is not clear-cut, he tends in the main to omit the religious and didactic element, whose close association with the normal romance content proved so attractive to French readers of the Thirteenth century.

It is, in the main, the narrative element which survives in Joseph of Arimathie, providing for English readers of the Fourteenth century, not a Grail romance, but an adventure story, in which the incidents are to be accepted for their own interest rather than on

account of their religious significance. Admittedly it is an adventure romance of a distinctive type, involving scenes and characters not normally favoured by the contemporary English audience, but for those accustomed to read Saints' Lives there would be nothing unwholesome in the appearance of Joseph of Arimathea in such an entertaining context. And the poet has taken care to accentuate the normal romance elements in his tale by giving as much attention as possible to the military adventures of Ewalak and Seraphe, whose prowess as knights was, for him at least, one of the most attractive features of the original.

As it stands, then, the alliterative poem is unconventional only in that it ignores the real subject, the essential interest of the work on which it is based. Within the restrictions placed upon him by his source matter the poet has tried to shape a brief narrative of adventure, emphasising the features usually demanded by the contemporary English audience, and eliminating the elements which are most characteristic of the Grail romances, and therefore, at this period, specifically French. He has used the Estoire del Saint Grail as a mine from which to quarry an episode which attracted him, ignoring the larger implications of the theme and the dominant character of the work. Unless he had before him some form of the French source very different from the relatively uniform version found in so many surviving MSS., he can be accounted responsible for the distinctive nature of the redaction and the individual form taken by the English poem. His treatment of that source reveals a highly independent and personal approach to a French original, designed to satisfy very different tastes and based upon very different literary criteria.

CHAPTER V

GOLAGRUS AND GAWAIN

Amongst the later productions of the alliterative revival, Golagrus and Gawain is generally dated 1450-1500, and assigned on internal evidence to Scotland.⁽¹⁾ No manuscript of the poem is known and a single copy has survived by chance in a unique collection of tracts printed at Edinburgh in 1508 by Walter Chepman and Andrew Millar.⁽²⁾ The alliterative poem,--one of the few un-mutilated pieces in the volume,--is complete, apart from a few single verses dropped by the printers, in 1362 lines, grouped in elaborately rhymed stanzas of 13 lines each. It early attracted the attention of Scottish antiquarians and there have been six modern editions.⁽³⁾

Various attempts have been made to assign the work to a specific Scottish poet. They rest upon two brief poetic references,

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- 1) See Oakden, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. I, p. 117.
 - 2) The Chepman and Millar Prints, which are now in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, are fully described in Dickson and Edmond's Annals of Scottish Printing, Cambridge, 1890, pp. 49-53.
 - 3) J. Pinkerton, Scottish Poems reprinted from scarce editions, 3 vols, London, 1792; D. Laing, The Knightly Tale of Golagrus and Gawane and other Ancient Poems, (facsimile reprint of 1508 edition), Edinburgh, 1827;

which seen, however, to be conflicting. Andrew of Wyntoun, in his Oryginall Cronycle, compiled c.1420, refers to a certain Huchown of the Awle Ryale, who, he says:-

.....maid the gret Gest of Arthure
And the Anteris of Gawane, (1)
The Epistill als of Suete Susane.

But Dunbar in his Lament for the Makaris, written some hundred years later, complains of the ravages of death amongst the Scottish poets:-

Clerk of Tranent eik he hes tane,
That maid the Anteris of Gawane, (2)

These passages imply two authors, a century apart, for a work whose title strongly suggests such a poem as Colagus and Gawain. A possible solution may be that one of the references is to the alliterative Awntyrs off Arthure, a Northern poem which, despite its title is mainly concerned with Gawain. But many years of research have revealed nothing more about Huchown and Clerk of Tranent than the details given by Wyntoun and Dunbar, and since it is impossible to say which, if either, wrote Colagus and Gawain, the controversy can add nothing of value to the study of the poem. (3)

(Cont.) Sir F. Madden, Syr Gawane, Bannatyne Club, London, 1839; M. Trautmann, in Anglia, II, Halle, 1879, pp.395-440; F.J. Amours, Scottish Alliterative Poems in Riming Stanzas, S.T.S., Vols.27,38, Edinburgh, 1892-97; G. Stevenson, Pieces from the Makculloch and the Gray MSS. together with the Chepman and Myllar Prints, S.T.S., Vol.65, Edinburgh, 1918.

- 1) F.J. Amours, ed. The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun, 6 vols., S.T.S., Vols.50,53-4,56-7,63, Edinburgh, 1902-5, 1914, Vol.7, 11.4332-4.
- 2) W.M. Mackenzie, ed. The Poems of William Dunbar, Edinburgh, 1932, No.7, E65-6.
- 3) On Huchown see G. Neilson, Huchowne of the Awle Ryale, Glasgow, 1902. For a survey of the bulky literature on the "Huchown controversy" in its bearing upon the alliterative poems see P.J. Ketrick, The Relation of 'Colagus and Gawain' to the Old French 'Perceval', (Catholic University of America Dissertation), Washington, D.C., 1931, pp.17-27, and for a more recent summary, Renwick and Orton, pp.409-12. Ketrick was inclined to assign Colagus and Gawain to Clerk of Tranent, though admitting (op.cit., p.27.): "All deductions, it is true, which are made from the scanty evidence at hand must, of necessity, be highly conjectural!"

Scottish patriotism may well have influenced the opinions of early commentators as to the source as well as the authorship of the work. Sir Walter Scott, failing to find any apparent French original for this or for the Avanture de Arthure, decided that they were both "compiled by Scottish authors from the Celtic traditions which still floated among their countrymen" while Op.cit., p. 8 regarded it as "entitled to claim the praise of an original composition". But in his edition of 1839 Sir Frederick Madden declared (op.cit., p. 338): "The plain fact is this, that the author of Golagros and Gawain has borrowed the entire outline of his romance from the French Roman de Perceval". He had compared the alliterative poem with an early printed text of the French romance in a prose recension, available to him in the British Museum, and found that it demonstrated "the close imitation of the Scottish writer and the fallacy of believing in 'floating celtic traditions'".

Later commentators, however, far from detecting "close imitation", were puzzled by the relatively vague parallel which they detected between Golagros and Gawain and the Roman de Perceval, and found it difficult to define the relationship between the two works. "Hat nun der Perceval selber dem dichter von Golagros and Gawain als vorlage gedient, oder ist Chrestien nur mittelbar von ihm benutzt worden? Da GG trotz handgreiflicher Übereinstimmungen doch auch vielfach von dem französischen gedichte abweicht, so möchte man geneigt sein, die zweite frage zu bejahen.

1) See his edition of Sir Tristrem, Edinburgh, 1804, p. lvi.

2) Tresplaisante et Recreative Hystoire du Perceval le gallois.... Paris, 1530. Vide infra, p. 303 and p. 314.

3) Op.cit., p. 338.

Aber welches auch die unmittelbare quelle des dichters von GG war, es
 ist gewiss, dass er sich freiheiten mit ihr genommen hat? (1) Apart from
 those who accepted Madden's identification of the Roman de Perceval
 as the immediate source without further inquiry into the nature of the
 redaction, (2) most scholars adopted one of two attitudes to the problem:
 they either agreed that Golagrus and Gawain is only indirectly related
 to the French romance, or rejected a written source of any kind and fell
 back upon the theory of floating Celtic traditions equally available
 to both the French and the Scottish author. Amongst the former Körting
 declared: "Mittelbare quelle des gedichtes ist wahrscheinlich der
Perceval des Crestien von Troyes?" (3) Miss Jessie Weston, on the other
 hand, although admitting an obvious association between the Perceval
 and Golagrus and Gawain, (4) maintained that, in common with the other
 Scottish poems upon Gawain, the alliterative work was based on a more
 primitive form of the insular source from which the French romance
 derived. (5) "That the reverse cannot be the case, and the English romances
 be drawn, as has been suggested for certain individual examples, from
 the Perceval is, I think, certain?" (6)

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- 1) K. Trautmann, Introduction to his edition in Anglia, II, Halle, 1879, p. 402.
 - 2) They include: F. J. Amours (op. cit., p. xviii.), P. Giles (Cambridge History of English Literature, II, Cambridge, 1906, p. 143.), A. Birsch-Hirschfeld (H. Suchier and A. Birsch-Hirschfeld, Geschichte der französischen Literatur von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart, Leipzig, 1913, I, p. 152.), J. D. Bruce (The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd. ed., Baltimore, 1928, II, p. 96.) and J. Wells (Rammal, p. 63.).
 - 3) G. Körting, Grundriss der Geschichte der Englischen Literatur, Münster, 1887, p. 110. For a similar opinion see A. D. Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances, New York, 1901, pp. 170-71.
 - 4) J. L. Weston, The Legend of Sir Perceval, London, 1906, Vol. I, pp. 234-5 & 283.
 - 5) Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 284-7.
 - 6) Ibid., Vol. I, p. 286. For a similar theory of elaboration from native legendary sources see L. Spence, A Dictionary of Medieval Romance and Romance Writers, London, 1913, pp. 140-1.

These conflicting opinions as to the origin of Golagrus and Gawain are contrary to the normal process of source-investigation in Middle English scholarship, where the first tentative identification of an original is progressively confirmed or corrected by later research. The confusion in this case persisted until the publication in 1931 of (1) P.J.Ketrick's definitive work on the problem. His researches explained the wide disparity of opinion amongst those who had previously studied the relations between the English and the French romances, ranging from the "close imitation" of Madden, through the indirect relationship suggested by Trautmann and Körtting, to the independent evolution postulated by Miss Weston. The views of those who had done any original work upon the problem had, in his opinion (op.cit., pp.11-12.), been conditioned by the forms of the Perceval text known to them, the disparity of their conclusions reflecting the considerable variations between the versions then available. (2) His own study was based upon all known texts, printed and in manuscript, and aimed at deciding conclusively whether or not Golagrus and Gawain derived from the Roman de Perceval, and if so, which of the surviving forms best represents its original source. His comprehensive and detailed comparison of the alliterative poem with the Perceval texts "proves beyond question, we are now convinced,

1) P.J.Ketrick, The Relation of 'Golagrus and Gawain' to the Old French 'Perceval', (Catholic University of Washington Dissertation), Washington, D.C., 1931.

2) Apart from Madden, who knew the printed prose text of 1530 (vide supra, p.300), and Miss Weston, who had access to a majority or all of the extant MSS., the Perceval was known to earlier scholars only in Charles Potvin's edition (Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal, 7 vols., Paris, 1867-71) of a manuscript, (Mans, Bibliothèque publique, 331/206) which "is in many respects a weak text and of inferior value so far as the section with which we have to deal is concerned...." (P.J.Ketrick, op.cit., p.12.)

(1)
that the author of the former had knowledge of a written French source? He found sufficient evidence "to establish a definite and immediate relationship between the Scottish text and the French versions, thus clearly disproving, on the one hand, the opinions of Scott, Laing and Spence, previously suspected, that the source of the poem lay merely in floating, Celtic tradition, and on the other, the view, apparently favoured by Trautmann and approved by Hürting, that a Perceval text constituted only the indirect source of Golagros and Gawain." (1)

As Ketrick pointed out (op.cit., p.8) none of the earlier commentators upon the origin of Golagros and Gawain were inaccurate in their references to the Roman de Perceval as the source of the alliterative poem, failing to distinguish between the Perceval proper and its later continuations. (2) Perceval le Gallois, ou le Conte del Graal, the last of the romances written by Chrétien de Troyes, has proved extremely difficult to date with any certainty. Scholars can agree only in placing it at some time between 1174 and 1190. (3) It is a complex work, even by comparison with the other romances of Chrétien, and carried out

1) F.J.Ketrick, op.cit., p.117.

2) The most recent edition is that by F.Moach, le Roman de Perceval, (Textes littéraires Français), Geneva, 1936.

3) V....de date incertaine (1174-80 or 1177-87)....? (P.Ramthor, Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VI^e - XIV^e siècles), Paris, 1954, p.196; "Some time after 1174, and before 1181...." (U.F.Holmes, A History of Old French Literature, revised ed., New York, 1948, p.285); V....between 1174 and 1190 V....the years from 1174 to 1180 seem more probable, though not certain (J.B.Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd.ed., Baltimore, 1928, I, p.233, -see also Vol.II, pp.83-4); "So würde die Arbeit an Graal in die Jahre 1180 bis 1187 fallen...." (S.Hofer, Beiträge zu Kristiane Werken Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, XLII, Heile, 1922, p.419).

on a vast scale, extending in the longest of the existing manuscripts to over 60,000 lines. Chrétien himself is credited only with the opening sections of the poem as it now exists, the remainder being attributed to various continuators. Opinions differ widely as to the point at which the original author left the poem incomplete,—presumably at his death,—but most scholars accept that the rubric Explicit Perceval la viel after line 10,601 in two of the surviving manuscripts indicates (1) the limit of Chrétien's composition. "It is almost generally agreed, too, that after the death of Chrétien, three or four (perhaps more) continuators took up his work: 1) an unknown writer sometimes called Pseudo-Vauchier, who wrote up to line 21,916 with interpolations, 2) Vauchier de Denain (variously called Gautier de Denet, etc.) who is credited by some with the further continuation of the verse to line 33,955 or 34,914, as variously given, and who composed his work most probably about 1190-1206, 3) Manessier, who took up the story at this point and carried it (c. 1214-1225) to a conclusion, and 4) Gerbert de Boncreuil, who at about the same date took up the story independently at the same place as Manessier and added a conclusion of his own." (2) The divisions between the various continuations, the dating of each and their assignment to the several poets who are believed to have had a hand in the work, have given rise to a good deal of controversy, and the results must at the best be considered as provisional. It has, for example, been suggested that the attribution

1) For a useful résumé of opinion on the divisions and multiple authorship of the Perceval see U.T. Holmes, op.cit., pp. 287-3. He concludes (p. 288): "It is quite probable that the exact divisioning of all this material needs revision; it is very possible that Chrétien did not stop at verse 10,601." But the new edition of the Perceval Continuations, now in progress, (W. Roach, The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes, Philadelphia, 1949-) is conducted on the basis of the accepted division, which begins the first continuation at l. 10,602.

2) P.J. Katrick, op.cit., pp. 52-3.

(1)

of the Second Continuation to Vaubier de Denain is doubtful. This deprives the name Pseudo-Vaubier,—a title of convenience given to the hypothetical author of the preceding section,—of its previous significance, and this portion of the Perceval is now generally known as the First Continuation.

The portion of the Conte del Graal which can definitely be ascribed to Chrétien is largely concerned with the early career of Perceval, his introduction to Arthur's court, first visit to the Grail Castle and subsequent quest, but long passages are devoted to adventures of Gawain, quite irrelevant to the main thread of the romance. The First Continuation begins by completing one of these Gawain-episodes, and thereafter it is Gawain who remains the central figure, entirely displacing Perceval, who only makes a belated reappearance as the Grail hero in the Second Continuation. Indeed, the whole theme of the Grail is largely ignored, except for the one or two scenes in the Grail Castle, the First Continuation is merely a Gawain romance which is in no significant way to be distinguished from the Hunbaut, the Vengeance Raguidel, Gawain and the Green Knight, or half a dozen others.⁽²⁾ The invariable association of this First Continuation with the Perceval in the surviving manuscripts makes it obvious that it was considered as a Grail poem, carrying on the story begun by Chrétien. Yet the anonymous author's conception of his function allowed him to ignore unity and continuity, to neglect Perceval, the original hero, and even to insert amongst the Gawain-material a complete romance on the adventures of

1) See M. Fillescu, Le Conte du Graal et ses auteurs, Paris, 1930, pp. 52-73.

2) W. B. E. B. ed. The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. I, Philadelphia, 1949, p. xiii.

yet another knight, Carados: "a group of episodes so extraneous that they have always been recognized as unrelated to the Grail theme!" (1)

It is scarcely surprising, in view of the scant respect which the author of the First Continuation showed for the hero and the theme of the original Perceval, that his own work was very freely handled by later writers. Its episodic nature and the absence of any unifying theme made it easy for redactors whose conceptions of romance were less grandiose to detach such portions as suited their purpose. (2) The author of Colasagus and Gawain chose to combine two separate incidents from the First Continuation, in both of which Gawain is the hero. The general resemblance between the English poem and these corresponding passages in the French is clearly demonstrated in the parallel abstracts given by Ketrick. (3) But the resemblance is one of outline only and the English adaptation is sufficiently free to account for the confusion and disagreement amongst earlier commentators who had not compared the versions in any detail.

Their work was made particularly difficult by the textual complexities of the Perceval Continuations and the unsatisfactory nature of the only complete edition then available. (4) Despite the great

1) W. Roach, op.cit., Vol. I, p. xiii.

2) "Perceval, otherwise Le Conte du Graal, must have been a favourite quarry for materials, for from one part alone of this long romance, -namely, from the beginning of the continuation of Chrestien's work by Gautier de Douzens /i.e., the First Continuation of the Pseudo-Vauchier/, no less than three Gawain poems have been taken out: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, based on the episode of Carados; the Joust of Sir Gawain; and Colasagus and Gawain derived from some of the adventures pertaining to the expedition of King Arthur against the Castel Orgueilleux" (P. J. Amours, op.cit., pp. xviii-xix.)

3) Op.cit., pp. 34-51. According to Ketrick, the alliterative poem corresponds to 11.16.383-634 and 11.18,209-19,456 of the French text as printed by C. Potvin (Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal, 7 vols., Paris, 1867-71) from the Mons MS.

4) The Potvin edition, based on Mons, Bibliothèque publique, 331/206, alone,

amount of scholarly interest concentrated upon the Grail theme in Arthurian romance and the attention consequently given to Chrétien's Conte del Graal, the textual relations of the Continuations have largely been ignored. And, in view of the wide variations between the existing texts, this has proved a serious drawback to the study of the poem as a whole and of its relation to the other works derived from it. The manuscripts of the original poem, the Perceval proper, present a relatively uniform and consistent text. "However, immediately after the point where Chrétien's work ends, the MSS. begin to vary from each other in a way which no longer permits the establishment of a single text" (2) An edition of the Continuations which takes into account this textual complexity has long been needed and is at present being supplied by Professor Roach. (3) The editor's aim is to make available all the significant elements in the text tradition as represented by the surviving

(Cont.) takes little account of the variations between the texts and ignores some of the manuscripts entirely. Both the representative value of the Mss MS. and the edition as a whole have been adversely criticised: see J.L. Weston, op.cit., I, p.234, and W. Roach, op.cit., I, p.xxiv, Note 2 and p.xxv.

- 1) For a guide to the extensive literature on the Perceval Continuations see:- U.T. Holmes, A Critical Bibliography of French Literature: Vol. I, The Medieval Period, Syracuse, N.Y., 1947, pp.131-2, and R. Bossuat, Bibliographie de la littérature française du moyen âge, Lun, 1951, pp.172-6 and Supplement, Paris, 1955, pp.49-51.
- 2) W. Roach, op.cit., Vol. I, p.xxiv.
- 3) The first three volumes, giving three distinct redactions of the First Continuation, have already appeared:- W. Roach, The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. I (Redaction of MSS T V D), Philadelphia, 1949; Vol. II/with R.H. Ivy/ (Redaction of MSS E M Q U), Philadelphia, 1950; Vol. III, Part I (Redaction of MSS A L P R S), Philadelphia, 1952. Later volumes are to contain the Second Continuation and the Continuation by Manessier. The work of Gerbert de Montreuil, of which a satisfactory edition already exists, is not to be included.

manuscripts and early printed forms. These, as he lists them, are:-

A: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 794.

First Continuation: ff.394f - 430e. Mid-13th.century.

B: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland: 19.1.5.

First Continuation: ff.25a - 130c. First half of the 13th.century.

K: Bern, Stadtbibliothek: 113.

This MS.contains only the Second Continuation.
Late 13th.century.

L: London, British Museum: Add.36614.

First Continuation: ff.84a - 163b. Second half of the 13th.century.

M: Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole de Médecine: H.249.

First Continuation: ff.59b - 154c. Late 13th.century.

P: Mons, Bibliothèque Publique: 331/206.

First Continuation: ff.119b - 229b. 13th.century.

Q: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 1429.

First Continuation: ff.73d - 198b. Second half of the 13th.century.

R: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 1450.

This manuscript, of the first half of the 13th.century, contains only the original Perceval and a fragment at the opening of the First Continuation, -ff.184d - 188d-, breaking off at a point which corresponds to l.11,596 in Potvin's edition. It therefore includes neither of the two passages corresponding to the material of Colagus and Gawain.

S: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 1453.

First Continuation: ff.65c - 130b. 14th.century.

T: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 12576.

First Continuation: ff.37a - 98a. Second half of the 13th.century.

U: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 12577.

First Continuation: ff.53a - 146c. 14th.century.

P: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: nouvelles acquisitions françaises 6614.

This manuscript, of the late 13th.century, has many large gaps in the text, and the First Continuation, -ff.15f - 77f-, ends imperfect at a point which corresponds to l.21,298 of Potvin's edition.

G: The sixteenth-century French prose version, printed in a black letter edition in 1530 for Galiot du Pré.

First Continuation: ff.47a - 131b.

D: The Middle High German translation made between 1331 and 1336 by two Alsations, Claus Wisse and Philipp Holin, at the request of Count Ulrich von Rappoltstein, and now extant in two MSS: Donaueschingen, Fürstenbergische Hofbibliothek: 97, and Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatensis: A.I.19.

These fourteen forms of the Perceval Continuations have not as yet been ~~thoroughly~~ studied: the textual analyses so far published have been confined either to a limited section of the text or to a number of the existing manuscripts only. The edition by Roach is intended to provide the basis for a thorough and comprehensive analysis, from which some conclusion as to the evolution of the textual tradition can eventually be drawn. ⁽¹⁾ The editor has meantime attempted a provisional grouping of the texts of the First Continuation on the basis of certain similarities and divergences of outline and of detail. "Anyone who undertakes to read the MSS. of the First Continuation is at once struck by the fact that, while there are great divergences between some MSS., there are also remarkable similarities between others, and that through all the variations and concordances there is a basic conformity to a large general plan. In spite of differences of length and infinite variations in details of expression, all the MSS. which preserve the whole of the First Continuation tell essentially the same story." "In addition to the common general content there are also resemblances of detail which permit a more exact grouping, - a grouping which can be made solely on the basis of the present state of the MSS. and without necessitating conjectures on how the existing differences and agreements may have been produced" ⁽²⁾

1) "The first requisite at present is not an explanation of the evolution of the text. It is rather that the materials be made available so that such an explanation can be formulated?" (Roach, op.cit., I, p.xl.)

2) Ibid., I, p.xxvi.

On this basis Roach has divided the thirteen texts of the First Continuation into three distinct groups: E M Q U and G representing a Long Redaction; A S L P and R a Short Redaction; and T V and D, which have features in common with both groups, representing a Mixed Redaction. (1) Such a grouping can only be provisional and does not necessarily invalidate the work of earlier investigators who, like Ketrick, studied the manuscript relations of the First Continuation within the limited section of the work in which their interest lay. Ketrick's textual analysis, confined to the two relatively brief episodes, (Potvin: 11.16, 323-634 and 11.18, 209-19, 456), corresponding to Colagus and Gawain, established a grouping of twelve First Continuation texts roughly similar to that given by Roach. (2) His comparison of textual variants first suggested the existence of two major groups: Group A including T V D Q M E and G, and Group B consisting of U S A and P. (3) The Mixed Redaction is here represented by the single text L which has features in common with both the major groups: "Apparently, the copyist had before him a manuscript from each group upon which he drew at will in making his version." (4) Closer analysis within the major groups showed (5) that although the B-texts are relatively uniform in nature, those of Group A can be subdivided, T V and D sharing characteristic readings

1) Op.cit., pp. xxxvii - xxxix.

2) Ketrick was not concerned with MS.R (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: 1,50) which lacks the sections in which he was interested. I have given the results of his textual analysis of the remaining forms in some detail as his dissertation is a rare book: so far as I can discover there is no copy of it in the British Isles.

3) Op.cit., pp. 69-71.

4) Ibid., p. 83.

5) Ibid., pp. 71-4.

(1)
 which distinguish them from Q M E and G. And similarly, the sub-group
 (2)
 Q M can be distinguished from E G. Finally, close examination of the
 latter group,--Edinburgh, National Library:19.1.5 and the 1530 French
 prose--, reveals distinctions between them which suggests that, though
 both are ultimately derived from a common form distinct from all other
 (3)
 known texts, neither is directly dependent upon the other.

On the basis of this classification Metrick compared the text
 of Golagrus and Gawain with the relevant sections of the First Contin-
 uation, in order to establish their general relationship. The nature of
 the Perceval variants and the very free rendering given in the allit-
 erative redaction restricted the comparison to matters of detail, verbal
 parallels which associate Golagrus and Gawain with various manuscript
 (4)
 groups and individual texts of the First Continuation. The evidence in
 each case is limited, but the total effect is cumulative: "Thirty passages
 distributed throughout the poem indicate one hundred and forty verbal
 agreements, sufficient surely to establish a definite and immediate
 (5)
 relationship between the Scottish text and the French versions...."
 Further analysis of this evidence suggests that the texts of Metrick's
 Group A are generally closer to the Scottish text than those of Group B,
 and within the former the texts of sub-group E G have certain readings
 in common with the alliterative poem which are not found in any of the
 (6)
 other forms of the Perceval. Under these circumstances the inter-
 relations of the two French texts are of particular importance.

1) Op.cit., pp.74-5.

2) Ibid., pp.76-9.

3) Ibid., pp.79-82.

4) Ibid., pp.86-107.

5) Ibid., p.117.

6) Ibid., pp.118-19.

"There can be no possible doubt but that the 1530 Prose is merely a working over of a copy in verse,.....the text being studded with rhyme words and obvious substitutions for the same" (1) Miss Weston was of the opinion that E, the Edinburgh MS, was the only existing text which could (2) be held to represent this verse original of the 1530 Print. Ketrick, on the other hand, considered "that Edinburgh shows considerable variation (3) from what the source of 1530 must have been, and that the two existing forms are only indirectly, though closely, related. And consequently he discovered a number of readings in which the 1530 Print stands closer to the Scottish poem than does the Edinburgh MS. These, together with certain expressions "which occur in the Scottish, are found in none of the verse texts, and are due directly to rhetorical and verbal changes (4) necessary in the renderings into prose", convinced him that Colagrus and Gawain was derived from a French prose text which is more closely represented by the 1530 Print than by any other existing form of the Perceval. (5)

This is as far as textual comparison can go. It cannot be shown that the 1530 Print is specifically the source of Colagrus and Gawain, and the date of publication would seem to rule out the possibility of direct association. There is, however, some evidence which "points to the existence in England at the time of composition of the Scottish poem of a prose Perceval manuscript. This would suggest that the paraphrase of a verse text of the Perceval into prose did not actually occur in 1530, as has been assumed, but that the 1530 Print represents merely a revised and perhaps slightly abridged edition of a previously existing prose manuscript, the actual paraphrase having been completed

1) Op.cit., pp.79-80.

2) J.L. Weston, op.cit., I, p.54.

3) Op.cit., p.82.

4) Ibid., pp.119-20.

5) Ibid., p.120.

in the late Fifteenth century and certainly before 1506, or possibly earlier. With this earlier text or a copy of it varying slightly from the prose text which eventually found its way into print in 1530, the author of Golagrus and Gawain was familiar⁽¹⁾

This identification of the 1530 Print as the form of the First Continuation most closely related to the lost source of Golagrus and Gawain explains the confusion and disagreement which had existed prior to the publication of Ketrick's study. Those who denied the existence of any French source whatsoever or would only admit an indirect connection between the Scottish poem and the Roman de Perceval were virtually restricted to the single MS. edited by Potvin, --Bons, Bibliothèque P-22249:331/206: "a text which lacks numerous readings that are especially valuable in proving the French as direct source of the Scottish verse"⁽²⁾. On the other hand, Madden, who was confident that Golagrus and Gawain was directly based upon the Perceval, happened to have access to one of the rare copies of the 1530 Print. His opinion, formulated in ignorance of the other Perceval texts, has now been confirmed by detailed analysis and comparison: the 1530 Print may be accepted as the best available guide to the original upon which the alliterative author worked.

Ketrick confined his study to establishing the relationship of Golagrus and Gawain to the Roman de Perceval and, apart from a few comments on the general characteristics of the Scottish poem, did not deal with the nature or conduct of the redaction. On the basis of the connection which he established between the alliterative work and the 1530 Print the process of adaptation can now be studied in detail.

1) Op.cit., p.20-21.

2) Ibid., p.117.

The black letter prose edition is now extremely rare. According to Ketrick there are only five surviving copies, including that in the ⁽¹⁾ British Museum, which was known to Madden. It bears the title: *Tres-plaisante et Re/creative Hystoire du Trespreulx et Vaillant Cheuallier/ Perceual le galloys Jadis cheuallier/ de la Table ronde. Lequel acheua/ les auentures du saint Gra/al. Avec aulchuns faictz/ belliqueulx du noble/ cheuallier Gauvain/ Et aultres che/ualliers estans/ au temps/ du noble/ Roy/ Arthus/ non au parauant Imprimé. Avec priuilege/ On les vend au Pallais a Paris/ En la bou/tique de Jehan longis. Jehan saint denis/ et Gal/liot du pre/ Marchans libraires demourant au/ dict lieu.*

The British Museum copy, though it lacks the table of contents found in the other examples, follows the general order, beginning with the Illustration de l'Hystoire du Graal and the prose redactor's prologue, then giving a version of Chrétien's Perceval, followed by the First and Second Continuations and the Continuation of Manessier, but omitting that of Gerbert de Montreuil. The prose version of the First Continuation follows closely the sequence of the verse texts, giving a series of major episodes,—the first generally known as the Book of Unifromeland, the second as the Book of Brun de Branlant, in both of which Gawain is the central figure. ⁽²⁾ After the interpolated Livre de Carados the narrative

1) For details of the edition and surviving copies see:— P.J. Ketrick, *op.cit.*, p.56; A.W. Thompson, ed. The Elucidation, a Prologue to the Conte del Graal, New York, 1931, pp.9-13; A. Hilka, ed. Der Percevalroman, Halle, 1932, pp.vii-viii; E. Roach, ed. The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes, Vol. I, Philadelphia, 1949, p.xxii. Hilka (*op.cit.*, pp.483-514) printed Chrétien's Perceval, but not the Continuations, and the only other edition (G. Apollinaire, Paris, 1916) omits the Gawain adventures in entirety.

2) The problem of nomenclature arises here. In referring to Gawain, Kay, Luegan, and the other Arthurian heroes familiar in both French and

returns to Gawain, and it is here, in the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleus, that there occur the passages which have been identified as the source of Golagrus and Gawain.

During one of the periodic assemblies of his court Arthur is reminded, by the sight of an empty seat at the Round Table, that Sirfet, one of his followers, is still imprisoned in the Chastel Orgueilleus, where he had been seized four years earlier. By this reference an extremely tenuous connection is established with the Perceval proper, in which Sirfet is briefly mentioned as one of those who engage themselves to besiege the Chastel Orgueilleus and rescue a maiden held there against her will. (1) Rebuked by the king for their neglect of a comrade in distress, the knights agree upon an immediate rescue, and Arthur, with a picked company, sets out to attack the castle. They cross Britain and many other countries, exhaust their provisions, and send Kay to obtain food at a dwelling by the way. There he finds a dwarf roasting a peacock upon a spit, abuses him, is attacked by his master who appears upon the scene, and returns, discomfited, to the others. Gawain, making a more courteous approach, is well received by the lord of the place, Yder le Bel, and gains hospitality for the whole company. When their journey is

(Cont.) English romances, I have adopted the common English form of the name to avoid complexity. In the case of unfamiliar place-names and the lesser characters who figure in the Perceval and its Continuations I have accepted the forms used by Roach in his analysis of the First Continuation (op.cit., Vol. I, pp. xlv-lxii) as his edition is now the standard reference work. In references to the alliterative poem I have retained the original names, in a standardised spelling, since, as will appear later, they provide a significant contrast with the forms in the French version.

1) See Chrétien's Roman de Perceval, ed. W. Roach, Geneva, 1956, ll. 4721-3.

resumed they come to a castle where Gawain is involved in a duel with
 Bran de Lis, whose sister he had seduced in an earlier episode of the
 First Continuation. Arthur eventually reconciles the two knights and
 takes Bran de Lis with him to join in the siege of the Chastel Orgueilleux.
 Once arrived and encamped before the castle individual knights of the
 Round Table engage in jousts with members of the besieged party, each
 side gaining some victories. During the hunt which occupies an interval
 in the jousting Gawain comes upon a strange knight lying under a tree
 almost bereft of his senses,--apparently because his amis has failed to
 keep a tryst with him there. This, Bran de Lis reveals, is the Riche
 Soudoier, lord of the Chastel Orgueilleux. When the joust is resumed
 Gawain meets the Riche Soudoier in single combat and eventually over-
 comes him. The vanquished knight chooses to die rather than surrender,
 as the news of his defeat will kill his amis. Gawain chivalrously
 agrees to pretend that he has been the loser until the lady can be sent
 away to another castle still believing her lover victorious. Once this
 deceit has been effected,--Gawain surrendering his sword to the maiden,--
 the Riche Soudoier makes his submission to Arthur, Girflet is released
 and the company of the Round Table sets out upon its return to Britain.
 On the journey further adventures arise, but the episode of the Chastel
 Orgueilleux is virtually self-contained and what follows need not con-
 cern us.

The general resemblance of this story to the plot of Colagus
and Gawain should be obvious from an outline of the Scottish poem.
 Arthur and the whole company of the Round Table set out upon a pilgri-
 mage to the Holy Land and journey towards Tuscany until their provis-
 ions are exhausted. They sight a walled town which Kay enters in

search of supplies, and finding a dwarf roasting birds over the fire in a rich hall, snatches the food and is assaulted for his discourtesy by an unknown knight. Gawain, sent to second Kay, makes a courteous application to the lord of the castle, who gladly entertains the whole company for some days before they again set out on their journey. Passing by a castle on the banks of the Rhone Arthur learns that its owner, Sir Golagrus, owns no superior, and swears that on his return he will exact homage from the independent knight. Having completed his pilgrimage the king returns to besiege Golagrus, who, with all courtesy, refuses to submit to him. The attack begins with a series of engagements, single and multiple, in which several knights on both sides are killed or captured, but neither party has the advantage. Finally Golagrus takes the field against Gawain, is overcome and forced to choose between submission or death. He prefers death to dishonour, but Gawain, unwilling to kill a noble adversary, agrees to pretend that Golagrus has been the victor and accompanies him to his castle in apparent defeat. Assured by his followers that they would remain loyal to him even in defeat Golagrus reveals the truth of his overthrow by Gawain and goes to make submission to Arthur. The two parties join in feasting and hunting before the king, having released Golagrus from his allegiance, returns to his own kingdom.

The obvious similarities between these two versions,--Kay's encounter with the dwarf, Arthur's siege of a castle which resists his authority, and Gawain's act of magnanimity towards a defeated adversary,--have frequently been commented upon, but there has not been any detailed comparison on literary grounds. Such a comparison can only be very general in nature since, as the abstracts already given should suggest,

the English poem is only vaguely modelled upon the French work and does not adhere to it in incidental matters. For the same reason the citation of parallel episodes can only be given as a general guide to the relationship of the two texts, since in many instances the English redaction bears little resemblance to the corresponding section in the French romance.

(1)
(1-39 : 101d - 103d.) The two versions inevitably differ very widely at the point which represents the beginning of the English poem. As the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux is only one in the long series of incidents making up the Perceval Continuations there is no significant break in the French text. The prose print marks the opening of a new episode with the rubric:-

Comment le roy Arthur prenoit son deduiot es chasses
des boys avec ses chevalliers et prives, et en retournant
declara a Gauvain et autres ses princes qu'il vouloit
tenir court la plus riche que il eust de son vivant tenue. (2)
(fol. 101d.)

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- 1) All references to the 1550 Print are to the British Museum copy, C.7.3.10, as reproduced in Rotograph No. 8 of the Modern Language Association of America, made available to me through the courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The pages of the original appear to have been regularly numbered upon the recto of each leaf in roman numerals, though in many places the numbers have been clipped by the binder. There are occasional errors: folio 101, for example, is actually labelled "Feuillet xviij", but as the same number appears three pages earlier and the following leaf is labelled "ciii", the correct numbering can be established. As the sequence appears to be generally correct I have employed it in references to the French text. Each leaf carries two columns of print on both recto and verso: 101a therefore refers to the left-hand column on the recto of page 101, and 103d to the right-hand column on the verso of page 103.
- 2) The French print employs a number of conventional abbreviations: a swung dash over a vowel for u or e, as in tſir, or over a for ue, as in aveſſe, and over p for re, as in ſaiers; ſ for qui; ſ for et; chllr for chevallier, and so on. I have expanded these without comment, added modern punctuation, accentuation, and a modern system of capital letters for proper names. Otherwise the text is reproduced as in the original.

The action thus summarised begins at once with the royal hunt, introduced in the usual conventional manner:-

Ce fust en may au temps nouveau que doucement chantaient
les oysillons, que le roy Arthur estoit au bois allé, et
avecques luy avoit mené de son plus privées la plus grande
et la plus saine partie, parceque jamais il ne aime a estre
seul, ce qu'il debvoit assés faire a cause de sa grande (1)
seigneurie. (fol. 101d.)

At the hunt Arthur lags behind, lost in thought, and, when questioned, declares that to make amends for recent inactivity he is planning a great feast at Cartmel on Pentecost. But when the company of the Round Table is assembled for the banquet the king remains pensive, carelessly wounds his hand with a knife at table, begins to weep and finally accuses his followers of disloyalty in that they have failed to rescue their companion Girflet from his long imprisonment in the Chastel Orgueilleux. This elaborate introduction has an obvious purpose: the author of the First Continuation, wishing to provide yet another sequence of typical Arthurian incidents,--a military quest of the Round Table, a distant expedition, combat and conquest with a noble purpose,--and hoping, perhaps, to link his work with the original Perceval, has revived the Chastel Orgueilleux as an old centre of such adventures. The narrative link is a tenuous one and the reader might well be forgiven for overlooking Girflet's part in the original expedition against the castle. But his imprisonment, as soon becomes apparent, is merely a peg upon

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- 1) This passage serves to illustrate the close relationship between the 1530 Print and the verse texts of the First Continuation. At this point the verse text said by Metrick to be nearest in form to the prose version, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland; 19.1.5, (cf. Rosch, op.cit., Vol. II, 1950), reads:-

Ce fu en mai au tens novel
que doucement chantaient oisel,
Et li rois fu au bois aler.
Son compaignons li plus privées
Dens e soi molt grant partie

which to hang a complex of adventures which may be enjoyed for their own sake, and, in the general nature of later Arthurian romance, it would readily be accepted as such. To lend significance to the incidents that follow it was merely necessary to stress the importance of this prime cause to Arthur and to the honour of his company, and this the elaborate introduction does, suggesting a revival of Arthurian energy and a renewal of chivalric purpose after a period of inactivity, giving new impetus to the un-ending sequence of romantic adventures.

But of all this the English version knows nothing: the alliterative poet passes directly to the narrative of action and begins upon the journey which, inevitably, leads to adventure:-

In the tyne of Arthur, as trew men us tald,
The king turnit on one tyde toward Fulkane,
Rym to seek our the way, that saillese was saild,
The syre that sendis all seill, suthly to same;
(11.1-4.)¹⁾

He makes no mention of Girflet's imprisonment, or of a specific campaign directed against the Chastel Orgueilleux, or, indeed of any previous adventure associated with it. His narrative is to be self-contained, depending for acceptance upon its intrinsic interest and not upon its association with Chrétien's Conte del Graal or the other episodes of the Parceval complex. His decision to ignore the elaborate introductory passages of the French text seems perfectly legitimate since the essential interest of the incidents which occur during Arthur's journey does

(Cont.)

For deduire et por congeignie,
Gar ains n'ans a nautre nous,....
(11.12, 507-13.)

Similar verbal parallels are apparent throughout, and in many places the original rhymes can be detected in the prose redaction.

- 1) References to the alliterative text throughout are to the edition by F.J. Amours, Scottish Alliterative Poems in Rising Stanzas, S.F.S., 27, 38, Edinburgh, 1892-7.

not depend upon the original cause of the expedition. All that is necessary here, as in most Arthurian romances, is something to send the king and his court wandering abroad so that adventures may come in their way. The redactor's substitution of a pilgrimage for the original quest is entirely adequate for the purpose and in no way alters the significance of the incidents which follow. Nor does it reflect any religious interest on his part which is likely to colour the romance as a whole: briefly introduced in the first four lines of the poem the pilgrimage is ignored thereafter, and on the only occasion when its revival seems likely to conflict with the narrative interest of the work (ll. 301-4) it is dismissed in the most summary manner. To the alliterative poet it was merely an excuse for the royal journey, one which was self-explanatory and allowed him to introduce without further preliminaries the incidents from the First Continuation which had
(1)
excited his interest.

And so the royal journey begins:-

Or, sans vous tenir prolixite de compte, le lendemain au
solaire levant furent tous les chevaliers montes ainay
que le roy l'avoit commandé, et vindrent tous ensemble
devant le palais ceulx qui eurent leur confanons, desquels
les noms je vous diray: premierement y fust Gauvain, le
roy Ydiar, Gossains, Koux, et Lucain le bouteillier, et Tor le
vaillant chevalier, Saigremor, et Maboegien, avecques le
fils au roy Urien, et Ydiar le fils Eud, le lait Hardy, le
comte de l'Englain, et Galegant le Gallois, et Carados
Broforas, le bon Taulart de Rougemont, lequel fust le
quinsiesme; lesquels tous armes devant la salle se
presenterent, et ainay que la attendoient, arriva le roy
Arthur tout armé qui gayeres a monter n'attendit.

(fol. 103a.)

It might have been expected that the English redactor, having substituted

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- 1) It has been suggested by Amure (op. cit., pp. 249-50) that the English redactor took the idea of Arthur's passage through Ruozzy upon pilgrimage from the alliterative Sorte Arthur (ll. 326-8), but the freedom and independence with which the whole redaction is carried out makes it seem unlikely that he should require a literary source for such a minor element in his narrative.

a convenient opening for the narrative link in the original, would thereafter have been content to follow his sources patiently and closely. But this is not to be a reduction of that kind: even in this comparatively uneventful prelude to action there is a change of emphasis which foreshadows major alterations to the French narrative at a later point. The English poem does not reproduce the list of knights who are to accompany Arthur. This might be explained on grounds of the difficulty which such a catalogue inevitably presents in alliterative verse where each name must be accompanied by alliterating adjectives to fill out the line, a clumsy, tedious business, especially where the list is dictated by the source and cannot be compiled on a basis of phonetic suitability. It is a problem which recurs throughout the redaction and will require fuller comment at a later point. In this instance the omission is not important since the English reader could be expected to apply the conventions of romance in assuming that Arthur is accompanied by the principal knights of the Round Table, Gawain, Kay, Lancelot, etc., who may later be named individually where the narrative requires. But the French text limits the king's companions to fifteen, and the point is underlined when those who have accompanied them beyond the city turn back again:-

Et quant trois lieues sont allés se arressterent en un
 gré ou le se departirent grant nombre de gens a grand
 regret, qui jusques en ce lieu avoient le roy conduit
 et accompagné, lesquels en la cité se retirent. Et le
 roy avecques les quinze seigneurs que quant et luy venoit
 trepasserent tout le pais forest, rochers, landes et plaines:

(fol. 103d.)

In the English version, however, the "quinze seigneurs" are replaced by a large force, riding as a general army with banners displayed:-

Farand on their stedis, stout men and stabill,
 Bony sternes our the strait startis on stray.
 Their banners schene with the cone, of silver and sabill,
 And withis gleyst as gold and gowdis so gay;
 Of silver and saphir schirly thai schene;

And fair battell on braid,
 Markit our and fair maid;
 With sparris spedely thai spaid
 Our fellis, in fars. (ll.18-26.)

So, while the Arthur of the First Continuation goes to attack the
 Chastel Orgueilleux with a picked company of fifteen knights, the Arthur
 of the English text rides upon pilgrimage surrounded by an army, sparring
 with all the forcefulness of alliterative verse. The change is not of
 major importance at this stage in the redaction, but it is symptomatic
 of much that is to follow.

(40-117 : 1034 - 1046.) As the company of the Round Table rides through
 the land it chanches upon adventure in the usual, unmotivated fashion of
 romance. Provisions become exhausted and the knights are in search of
 somewhere to replenish:-

Tant ont en avant chevauché que ung grand arbre
 adviserent, sous lequel es sont arrestes, et la avoit
 assez pres une fort belle et clere fontaine.....

(fol.1034.)

While they rest in the shade Kay sights a hut, a "maisonnette", "laquel
 estoit close de paille", where an old woman directs him to a larger
 dwelling, a "manoir", standing in its own demesne, and to this he rides.
 The English version leads up to the first adventure in much the same
 way, though with some significant differences of detail and proportion.
 In the alliterative poem the preliminaries have disappeared: there is
 no peasant hut, no old woman to give directions. The manor itself (here
 replaced by a walled city, probably for reasons of alliteration) is
 sighted in two lines and entered by Kay within twenty. The change is
 undoubtedly one for the better since the naturalistic detail of wayside
 enquiries, etc. merely delays the adventure without contributing to the
 effect of its narration. Yet the redactor who can dispense with these
 preliminaries betrays his indebtedness to the French text in citing his

town beside the fountain associated with its first appearance in the original:-

As thay walkit be the syde of ane fair well,
Throu the schynnyng of the son ane ciets thair se,
(11.40-41.)

Occasional echoes of this kind demonstrate the relationship between Malagrus and Gawan and the First Continuation, even where the English redactor has fundamentally altered both the narrative and the significance of his original.

In this particular episode the English version shows a decided change of emphasis which has necessitated some minor alterations to the original narrative. Kay, in the Perceval Continuation, rides to the manor which appears deserted until he enters the great hall:-

Et veist en une cheminee ung fort beau feu et grand
allumé ou il n'y a homme ne femme apperceu fors ung
seul main qui rotissoit ung paon moult gras, lequel
estoit enhasté en une broche de pommier, vers lequel
vint le seneschal..... (fol.104a.)

The Seneschal addresses the dwarf courteously but gets no reply, and, growing angry demands the peacock for his own dinner and for his king. The dwarf refuses and twice answers him impertinently, until Kay, losing his temper, kicks him into the fireplace. At this there enters a knight of handsome appearance and dress:-

.....et tenoit ung laz de soie verd par lequel il
tenoit ung levrier apres luy..... (fol.104b.)

who mildly rebukes Kay. But, when the Seneschal replies haughtily, the handsome knight satisfies his desire for the peacock in a violent manner:-

A fors le paon print a plain poing qu'il lieve bien
legierement, duquel de toute sa vertu en a feru le
seneschal d'ung si grand et se pesant coup que petit
s'en fault que occis ne l'a, et bien vous dis qu'il
assena au col si que cheoir le feist sur le plancher
plat estendu.....

Adonc jette le chevalier le paon a ses deux
grans levriers..... (fol.104c.)

Kay, marked for life by the blow, is then ejected by two armed retainers, and returns to his companions, who question him as to whether he has found supplies for them:-

.....et Keux leur respondit que non et que illec trop
malle terre avoit pour trouver a manger. (fol.104d.)

The function of this incident is obvious enough: to demonstrate the blundering stupidity and pompous pride of Kay, and to suggest how far short he falls in his rashness, discourtesy, cowardice and untruthfulness, of the true ideal of a chivalric hero. It is a familiar theme, constantly recurring in various forms throughout the Perceval complex and, indeed, the whole of Round Table romance, in which the Seneschal's defects of character serve as a foil to the perfection of successive Arthurian heroes.

The hero of the Chastel Orgueilleux sequence, as the title of the English redaction suggests, is to be Gawain, who, in this preliminary incident must succeed where Kay has failed. It is in order to throw into relief Gawain's courage, courtesy and nobility of character that Kay is humiliated in this encounter with the dwarf. But though in the English version the incident remains unchanged in all essentials the alliterative poet has significantly altered the emphasis throughout. When the city is first sighted the Seneschal demands permission to enter it, speaking somewhat boastfully, and is warned by Arthur to behave discreetly:-

"Grant me, lord, on yone gait guthly to say;
And I call bold-word, but abaid, bring to you hair,
Gif he be freik on the fold your freynd or your day!
"Sen thi will is to wend, wy, now in weir,
lake that wisly thou wikk, Criste were the fra wa!"
(11.54-8.)

There is nothing to correspond to this in the French. Similarly, when

he enters the hall Kay dashes straight to the fire and snatches the roasting bird from the dwarf:-

Schir Kay ruschit to the roist, and reft fra the same,
lightly slaught, throu lust, the lye fra the lyre;
To feid hym of that fyne fode the freik was full fame;
(11.81-3.)

The preliminaries have all disappeared: there is no courteous approach by Kay, no insulting provocation on the dwarf's part to justify the un-knightly assault. In the French text it is specifically stated that Kay was at first restrained by a sense of shame from what he realised to be an unworthy action:-

Et le main ne daigna respondre, de quoy fust le seneschal
sy yrés que, se il n'aust craint honte, il eust tout a ceste
heure occis, mais il voit bien et scait pour vray qu'on
l'en pourroit a droit blamer. (fol.104a.)

But in the English version the voice of conscience is never raised. The redactor's intention is evident: to concentrate upon the essential physical details of the incident in a forceful, abbreviated narrative, displaying Kay's rashness and vulgarity directly and vividly, and dispensing with everything which is merely incidental to this function. There can be no doubt that he achieves his purpose, -but not without some loss. The English narrative is more direct but also less subtle than the French. Kay is made to seem not merely crude and boorish but also rather ridiculous, and what the incident gains in forcefulness it loses in credibility and human interest. Even where he follows the original more closely the redactor has apparently missed the significance of some details. For example, the stranger knight's rebuke and Kay's churlish reply, his ejection and lying report to his comrades remain such as in the French:-

The renk restles he said to Arthour the king;
Said: "Lord, wendis on your way,
Yone berne with yow with may;
To prine hym forthir to pray,
It helpis na thing!" (11.113-17.)

but the alliterative poet has failed to appreciate the ironic fitness of the blow with the spits:-

Thair with the grune, in his grief, leit gird to schir Kay,
Fellit the freke with his fist flat in the flure.

(11.105-6.)

And similarly he omits the detail of the greyhound led by the strange knight and, in consequence, loses a pleasant touch of humour and human interest in the sequel to this incident.

The poet's attempt to concentrate and simplify the somewhat diffuse prose narrative is quite understandable: alliterative verse, by nature somewhat rigid and slow-moving, is more suited to the description of a single strong situation or of violent action than to outlining a sequence of events or conversational exchanges. But he is strangely inconsistent in his abbreviation. He omits incidental details which give depth and reality to the narrative of action, yet he expands a passing reference in the French text to the richness of the hall where the scene takes place into an elaborate descriptive set-piece:-

Gyne hynt to see his hall
That was astali with pall;
Weill wrought was the wall,
And payntit with pride.

The mylour dair of the deise dayntely was drest
With the doughtyest in their dais dyntis south dale;
Bright letteris of gold blith vnto blent,
Makand mousouns quene maist of murethys south melle.
He saw nase lewand laid vnto left lent,
Southir lord he led, leif ye the lele.
The renk raikit in the saill, rials and gent,
That wonder wisly was wrought with wourship and wile.

(11.62-73.)

The passage is not inappropriate: it is merely somewhat out of proportion with the general abbreviation of the English work. It seems unnecessary to read any special significance into such an expansion. The case with which the alliterative technique, adding adjective to adjective, piling detail upon detail, leads to over-elaboration in description, probably

accounts to some extent for this and similar instances in which the economy of the English poem is un-balanced. But the desire for rapidity of narration, for directness and forcefulness of effect,—with the consequent defect of over-simplification and lack of subtlety,—is the dominant consideration throughout this sequence.

(118-371 : 1048 - 1050.) The same desire and something of the same defect mark the following sequence, which is the pendant to Kay's encounter with the stranger knight, whose name, he now learns, is Yder le Bal. Kay's whole concern on his return is to conceal his misadventure from his companions, by pretending that he has met no one:—

Et plus leur dist: "Amis, faict il, veilles sçavoir que
 meult loing nous fault chevaulcher, sains que puissons
 hotel trouver, ou il y ait petit me grant a manger,
 come l'en m'a dist et compté? Et Gawvain alors luy
 respondi: "Toutesvois, faict il, cil qui a vous parla
 vist de manger, si come vous, sans viande ne veist
 il pas en cestegande lande si penible. (fol. 104d.)

The Geneschal is forced to confess his meeting with the lord of the manor who, he says, is cruel and will give them no shelter. Gawain's subtle and half-humorous exposure of the attempted concealment is sufficient to remind the company of Kay's traditional character, and Arthur, deciding to send a more tactful messenger, chooses Gawain himself. The corresponding passage in the English has precisely the same outcome, but both effect and emphasis are very different. What is merely implied in the French text is made explicit in the alliterative poem: Gawain's oblique hint at Kay's deception becomes a direct attack upon his character and Arthur comments openly upon Gawain's more trustworthy nature:—

Than spak schir Gawane the gay, gentious and gude:
 "Schir, ye know that schir Kay is crebbit of kynde;
 I rede ye mak furth one man, schir of mude,
 That will with fairnes fraist frendship to fynd.

Your folk ar febill and faynt for falt of their fude;
 Sum better bold-word to abide, vndir wod lynd!
 "Schir Gawyne, graith ye that gait, for the gude rude!
 Is nane so bowsom and berne, brith for to bynd?"
 (11.118-25.)

A single stanza conveys the matter of the original forcefully and with economy, yet the effect is not altogether successful. This whole incident is used by the English redactor, as by the French author, to heighten the nobility of Gawain's character in contrast to that of Kay. To make Gawain comment directly and crudely upon the Seneschal's defects is to make him speak out of character and to weaken the effect intended.

What was humorous and laconic in the original has become harshly realistic and over-emphatic in the redaction. There are probably two reasons for this change in emphasis. The English author could not necessarily rely on his audience's familiarity with the stock character of Kay in French romance, and, as he had made no use of the earlier incidents in the Parvul complex which illustrate its defects of folly, pride and boastfulness, he was forced to bring out these characteristics pointedly, yet briefly, in a manner consistent with their ancillary function in his story. And, furthermore, the very nature of alliterative verse, with its forceful iteration and emphatic expression, makes it unsuited to convey the *légende*, conversational tone which pervades the prose text at this point. To have given the equivalent of each idea in the original, with appropriate alliterative phraseology, would have resulted in a cumbersome and overweighted narrative, quite out of keeping with its function in the story as a whole. To avoid this the poet has attempted to summarise the French narrative in a manner more suited to the alliterative medium, and in doing so has inevitably lost some of the subtlety of the original.

The defect exemplified here is general in the English redaction and spoils, to some extent, the intended effect of what follows. Gawain

makes a courteous approach to the lord of the manor, is well received and gains hospitality for his companions who are graciously welcomed by Yder le Bel:-

Puis amont en la tour le mena ou encloies estoient les levriers, lesquels la chair du poon mengeoient. Et quant le roy les eust advisez, dist en se rejoissant: "Par ma foy, faict il, ses deux levriers sont mieulx desgués que nous n'avons ce jour esté." Et le chevallier en souvrist; ce que Keux entend, mais bien se garda de parler. (fol. 104d.)

There is humour in Arthur's wry reference to the fatal peacock, and irony in the host's smile, but both were, apparently, lost upon the English redactor. Having disregarded the earlier reference to the dog accompanying Yder le Bel,--admittedly incongruous at that point--he makes no use of this human incident which lends depth and reality to the French version. And, similarly, he ignores the Seneschal's discomfort at the sight of the peacock, the secret amusement of the lord, and the fun at Kay's expense during the feast:-

Et vous dis bien que les serviteurs du chevallier, en faisant le service, se esparguierent a rire secrettement de l'arsure du seneschal. Et le main ne s'en peult celer, ainsi en commença a parler. Et n'eust pas par Keux esté sceu ne le main ne l'eust ramentu, car plus que nul il le colloit, et le chevallier pareillement, pour l'arsure que vous ay dist, que clairement apparaissoit, disoit on, que Keux fust tigeux. Dequy tout le jour eust grand honte quant il veoit que tous ensemble le gabelent ses compaignons, tant qu'il s'en allerent coucher. (fol. 105e.)

This is not directly reproduced in the English version and what corresponds to it is less subtle, more direct, lacking the humorous over-tones of the French, but laying more serious stress on the chivalric issues involved:-

"There come ane laithles leid air to this place,
With ane girdill ourgilt, and vthir light gore;
It kythit be his cognisance ane knight that he was,
Bot he was ladlike of laithis, and light of his fore.
The verray cause of his come I knew nocht the case,

Bot wonderly wraithly he wrought, and all as of were.
 Yit sail I nocht what he is, be Godeis grute grace!
 Bot gif it happen that he be our knyght of youris here,
 Has done my lord to displeise, that I hym sail ryght,
 And his presence plane,
 I say yow in certane,
 He sail be set agane,
 As I am trew knight!" (11.157-69.)

It should be noted that Kay is not directly named as the offender: the redactor has reproduced the spirit of the original in making his disgrace implicit rather than a matter of open complaint against him.

Throughout this section the English author gives fuller expression to some other elements which are cursorily treated in the French. Of these the most important is the formal exchange of complimentary speeches, between the lord and Gawain, between Gawain and Arthur, between Arthur and his host. These make up a large proportion of the English poem at this point and though they do something to advance the action, casting the prose narrative into direct speech, they are at greater length than their practical function requires. There is a certain formal stiffness in the elaborate combination of rhyme and alliteration which constitutes the Colours and Gawain stanza that is peculiarly fitted to these courtly exchanges. The cumulative effect of the alliteration is equally suited to richness of description, and the alliterative poet does fuller justice to the feast prepared for Arthur, than does the prose author who tends to generalise in such matters:-

Their myght service he done, with segis in sail,
 Thought all selcought was sought fra the son to the nee;
 Wynis went within that wane, wairt wourthy to wail,
 In coupis of cleir gold, brightest of bice.
 It was full fair for to tell treuly in tail.
 The seir coursaris that was set in that semble.
 The meriest was manskitt on mets, at the mill,
 With mercurialis myrthfully makand thair gles.
 (11.209-16.)

The poet clearly realised the effectiveness of his medium for such purposes and gave it full rein. The resulting passages are successful in

themselves, but rather out of proportion to their function in the narrative. They contrast oddly with the somewhat alliptical expression given to the essential subject of this section: the glorification of Gawain by contrast with the blundering Kay.

A : 105a - 113a.) Kay's adventure with the dwarf having served its purpose the narrative of the First Continuation passes to another episode, much greater in length, of which the English redactor makes no use whatsoever. Leaving the castle of Yder le Bel, the company of the Round Table travels on its way, its progress marked by the occasional rubrics in the prose text:-

Ains a chevalcher les convint jusqu'au Vergier des
Sepultures, ou on trouve les adventures; la avec les
reclus mangierent dont y en avoit cent ou plus. (fol. 105a.)

The author will not tell of the wonders of the Vergier until the proper point in his story, and so he passes on:-

Comment le roy Arturus, après estre party du Vergier aux
Sepultures, envoya Gauvain pour chercher ou ils pourroient
loger et repaistre, et les merveilles que Gauvain trouva
et amonça au roy Arturus, lequel y alla liement. (fol. 105b.)

Gawain, in his search for shelter, follows the tracks of a band of knights and is led to a castle which appears deserted, though the tables stand ready spread. He fetches the king and his companions and all sit down to eat. Suddenly Gawain rises from table and hastily puts on his armour. Questioned by Arthur he reluctantly narrates the substance of one of his earlier adventures, an incident which forms part of the Book of Brun de Brabant in the First Perceval Continuation. Wandering abroad upon an occasion Gawain had chanced on the tent of the beautiful Dameoisele de Lis and had lain with her by her consent. Promising to return and marry her, he rode on his way but was pursued by the lady's father and brother, both of whom he killed in fair fight. A second brother, Brun de Lis, then

took up the fight, but seeing Gawain weakened by the re-opening of an old wound, agreed to postpone the combat until the next time they should meet, when Gawain must fight as he is found, either armed or unarmed. And now Gawain has just caught sight of the shield of Bran de Lis hanging on the wall of a neighbouring room, and has armed to be ready to meet him:-

Comment Gawvain, neveu du roy Arthur, après qu'il eust compté la verité a son oncle, luy pria que tost ils departissent de ce lieu pour la crainte qu'il avoit que Brandelis ne le trovast en celle place ou ils estoient; ce que le roy ne vullut accepter, de quoy grand mal luy en oyda venir. (fol. 109a.)

Meanwhile, Kay, pursuing a dog which has entered the hall, is led to a garden where he comes upon Bran de Lis and his followers. He is recognised and seized by them:-

Comment Ken le caneschel du roy Arthur, après qu'il fust entré au jardin ou estoient tous les chevaliers, fust prins et mené a Brandelis, qui estoit le seigneur du chasteau, auquel il dist que le roy Arthur et Gawvain estoient dedens la grand salle du dit seigneur, assis a table pour prendre leur refection. (fol. 109c.)

Bran de Lis goes at once to the hall and challenges Gawain to resume their duel. As they fight a damsel enters, and, seeing that Gawain is in danger of defeat, brings forward a child of five years which she urges to plead with Bran de Lis not to kill its father. Later, when Gawain has gained the upper hand, she sends the child to beg him not to kill its uncle. As the knights continue to fight the child in play attempts to catch their shining swords: all are touched by the sight and Arthur stops the combat:-

Comment la paix se feist entre messyre Gawvain et Brandelis par la supplication du roy Arthur et ses princes, et le petit enfant estant entre eux. (fol. 112c.)

When Bran de Lis learns the purpose of Arthur's journey he offers to

accompany him, the king agrees and the whole company sets out for the Chastel Orgueilleux.

It is not difficult to see why this material did not appeal to the English redactor and why he made no use of it in his version. Golagrus and Gawain is apparently complete as we have it and it was clearly intended to be a self-contained romance in celebration of Gawain. Having opened his story with the incident in the manner of *Yder le Bal* the redactor could make no use of the episode which follows since it is merely the second half of an adventure begun very much earlier in the First Continuation,--Gawain's liaison with the *Damoiselle de Lis* and the subsequent feud with her brother. (1) The main scene, in which the child is interposed between the two combatants,--a characteristic 'set-piece' of chivalric romance--, would be meaningless to a reader who did not know that it is the *Damoiselle de Lis* who places her child by Gawain between its father and its uncle, *Bran de Lis*. It seems unlikely that the English author can have possessed a copy of the First Continuation which included Kay's encounter with the dwarf and the siege of the Chastel Orgueilleux while omitting this intervening episode. Even had his version of the French lacked the earlier scenes of the feud with *Bran de Lis*, in the Book of Brun de Branlant, it would have been quite easy for him to reconstruct them from the abbreviated account which Gawain gives to Arthur. Everything suggests that the alliterative poet deliberately chose to omit an incident which he considered unsuited to his purpose. And, technical reasons apart, there is a very obvious objection to its inclusion in a romance which celebrates Gawain as the pattern of perfect chivalry. The episode as a whole does not show Gawain in an ideal light: his seduction of the *Damoiselle de Lis*, the

1) In the British Museum copy of the 1530 Print the first half of this adventure occupies fol. 338. to fol. 762.

death of her father and brother at his hands,—though in fair fight,—the inconclusive nature of his first combat with Bran de Lis and his obvious unwillingness to meet him again when he begs Arthur to leave Bran's castle,—all are little to his credit. The effect which the redactor had obtained by contrasting Gawain with the boorish, cowardly Kay could only have been weakened by following him through this somewhat dubious affair, and certainly little of ideal value is lost by its omission.

No technical problems of any importance are raised by the omission. The English author has merely fused together the departure from the castle of Bran de Lis with that from the house of Idar le Bel, and he follows Arthur upon his journey towards the Chastel Orgueilleux as though nothing had intervened in the source. The episodic construction of the original made this appearance of continuity easy to achieve. There was only one apparent difficulty: in the French version Bran de Lis accompanies Arthur and throughout the remainder of the book he fulfils a special function as expositor of everything which happens at the Chastel Orgueilleux. Such an expositor was also necessary to the English redactor, and as his readers could know nothing of Bran de Lis or the events which bring him into Arthur's company, he was forced, as we shall see, to provide a substitute. But, this small detail apart, the two incidents are quite distinct and detached, and the episode at the castle of Bran de Lis disappears from the English version without trace and without apparent loss.]

(222-311 : 113a - 113b.) Even before Arthur and his followers leave the castle of Bran de Lis their host has taken up his role as the guide to everything connected with the Chastel Orgueilleux and its inhabitants:—

Et vous dis bien que le roy se parloit envis de Brandelis,
car moult voellentiers escoutoit les contes qu'il luy
recitoit du riche Chasteau Orgueilleux. (fol. 113a.)

The source of his knowledge, or what previous connection he has had with the Chastel Orgueilleux, is not made clear: his knowledge may be that of a neighbour, since his lands appear to lie next to those of the Chastel, -though at seven days' journey! Here probably his omniscience is a literary convention adopted by the author of the First Continuation as a means of conveying information essential to the story. His familiarity with the wooded countryside in which the castle is situated makes him advise that tents, bounds, and hunting servants be added to the military equipage, so that the party may camp before the walls and hunt during the intervals of the sieges:-

Tout ont sur les somiers trousseé, et meismes escouriers
 et sergiens tels couse ils les voullurent mener, si que
 plus ne restoit que a partir. Le roy par uns hardy matin,
 acompaignié de sa noblesse, de ce chastel partist, et se
 mirent tous au chemin. Brandelis ne demora pas ains,
 quant et le roy s'en partit. Sept grans journées après errant,
 en passant par maintes forests, et puis en ung plain venue,
 duquel ils peurent percevoir le riche Orgueilleux.

(fol. 113a - fol. 113b.)

The original version contains little more than this: less than a single column of print, providing a slight narrative link between the incidents in the castle of Bran de Lis and the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux. The corresponding passage in the alliterative poem contains some ninety lines, bearing only the loosest relationship to the French text, and fulfilling various functions which would have been superfluous in the original, but which are rendered necessary by the distinctive nature and independent conduct of the redaction.

As in the French version the section opens with a journey, the journey which carries Arthur and his companions away from the scene of Kay's disgrace, -but the redactor has evidently retained some memory of the tents suggested by Bran de Lis:-

That trussit wv tentis and turnit of town,
 The roy with his Round Tabill, richest of ryme.

They drive on the da deir be dalis and down,
 And of the nobillest be-nage, noumerit of nyne.
 Quhen it drew to the dirk nycht, and the day yeld down,
 Thai plantit down pavillonis, proudly fra thine.
 Thus iournait gentilly thyr chawalrouse knightis,
 Ithandly ilk day,
 Throu weny far contray,
 Our the mountains gay,
 Heltis and hillis. (11.224-34.)

And this journey too brings the travellers within sight of the castle which they are to attack. But there the resemblance between the two versions ends. The author of the First Continuation gives no detailed description of the Chastel Orgueilleus, either here or elsewhere in his romance, but the English redactor devotes two stanzas (11.235-60) to its situation, on a high rock beside a river where many ships sail, its defences, a double ditch and a stout wall lined with three and thirty towers, and the fair, sunny land which lies round about it. The details are all appropriate to the role which the castle is to play in the narrative, but they are the product of the redactor's imagination, not drawn from his sources.⁽¹⁾ What follows is equally the creation of the alliterative poet. Arthur asks:-

Quha is lord of yone land,
 Lusty and likand,
 Or quha of is he baldand,
 Payne wald I wit? (11.257-60.)

These are questions of the kind to which, in the original version, Bran de Lis supplies the answers. Despite his omission of the Dameisale de Lis incident and its sequel, the English redactor might have retained

1) A detail elsewhere in the poem suggests that the river on which the castle stands is the Rhone. During the rejoicings which celebrate its surrender we are told:-

On the riche river of Rone ryot thai maid; (1.1345.)
 There is nothing in the original to suggest such a site, the Chastel Orgueilleus being very vaguely located, and alliterative convenience may well explain the English author's precision in the matter.

Bran de Lis in this role, leaving the reader to imagine that he was merely one of the Round Table knights. Instead he has chosen to introduce a new character, Sir Spynagros, who first appears at this point and throughout the poem supplies the place of Bran de Lis in the original. As a minor member of Arthur's court he figures elsewhere in romance, both French and English, and notably in *Malory* where he is called
 (1) Spynogrys. But he is not included amongst the fifteen chosen knights
 (2) who are Arthur's only companions in the Book of the Chestei Orgueilleus, and there is no apparent reason why he should have been chosen for the role he fills, except, perhaps, the alliteration which his name provides with the various parts of the verb 'to speak'. That, at least, is his only office in the poem:-

Then schir Spynagrose with speche spak to the king:
 "Yone lord haldis of name leid, that yone land aw,
 Bot ever-lesting but legiance, to his loving,
 As his eldaris has done, enduring his law!
 "Hevinly god!" said the heynd, "how happynis this thing?
 Herd thair ever ony sage sa selcouth and saw!
 Sal never myne hart be in saill na in liking,
 Bot gif I loissing my life, or be laid law,
 Be the pilgimage compleit I yee for saull prow,
 Bot dede be my destenyng,
 He sall at my agane curyng
 Mak homage and obliissing,
 I mak myne avow!" (11.261-73.)

This stanza introduces an entirely new idea, to which there is nothing to correspond in the French text,--Arthur's resolve to exact homage from the lord of the castle. It is true that at the end of this episode in the French the lord of the Chestei Orgueilleus does homage to Arthur, but rather in acknowledgement of his defeat by Gawain than

1) See J.P. Kotrick, op.cit., pp. 115-16.

2) Vide supra, p. 321.

as one forced to accept permanent subjection to a feudal overlord. And in the First Continuation this is no more than an incidental detail: it is not made the motive for future action. Arthur's decision to reduce the master of the stronghold to submission is an invention of the English author. Its function is obvious: in the Perceval Continuation the Chastel Orgueilleux is the goal of an expedition deliberately undertaken for the specific purpose of rescuing Girflet, whereas in the alliterative poem Arthur comes upon the castle accidentally in the course of a pilgrimage and the plot requires that he be given some pretext for an attack upon it. The general character attributed to him in such Arthurian romance, - proud, overbearing, intolerant of any rival to his power, - no doubt suggested this solution to the redactor. As a pretext for the scenes of conflict which follow it is quite as appropriate as that provided by the imprisonment of Girflet in the original.

The emphasis with which Arthur speaks is, no doubt, the poet's method of suggesting, briefly but forcefully, the strength of feeling which moves him to attack the castle, giving the whim of moment verbal importance in keeping with the long train of events which arise from it. One might well expect that as the mainspring of future action Arthur's resolve would be accepted without comment upon its justification, moral or practical, especially in English romance, whose readers are generally supposed to have been less interested in motivation and less concerned with issues of moral right and wrong than their Continental counterparts. The reply made by Sir Synagros comes, therefore, as something of a surprise:

"Allord, scharis of sic speche, quhill ye speir more,
For abandonit will he nocht be to borne that is borne.
Or he be strangeit with strenth, yone sterne for to schere,
Mony ledis salbe loiset, and liffis forlorne.
Spekis na succoury, for Cristis sone deir!
Yone knight to sear with schaitt ye chaip nocht but scorne.

It is full fair for to be fallow and feir
 To the best that has bene brevit you beforne.
 The myghty king of Massidone, wourthiest but wene,
 Thair gat he name honage,
 For all his his parage,
 Of lord of yone lynage,
 Nor neuer none sene,

The wy that vendis for to were quhan he wenys best,
 All his will in this world, with welthis I wys,
 Yit sall be licht as leif of the lynd lest,
 That welteris down with the wynd, sa wauerand it is.

.....
 Your mycht and your maieste mesure but mys?
 "In faith!" said the cruely king, "trou ye full traist,
 My hecht sall haldin be, for baill or for blis.
 Sall neuer my likame be laid valaissit to sleip,
 Whill I haue gart yone berne bow,
 As I haue maid mys auow,
 Or ellis mony wedou (1)
 Ful wraitly sal weip! (11.274-95.)

There are many incidental references to the power and authority of the lord of Chastel Orgueilleux, his fame and prowess as a knight and the loyalty of his followers, scattered throughout the French text, but there is no sustained passage comparable to this. The power of expression and real poetic ability shown in these stanzas gives surprising authority to the warning that Arthur should not make war lightly or in a boastful spirit against an adversary whose worth and nobility of character are praised by a member of the opposing party. The firmness of Arthur's resolve, his re-iteration of his intention, in the face of such a warning, is a cardinal point in the construction of the English version. In order to give reality and importance to the scenes which follow the king must be made to stake his reputation as the supreme overlord of all who come within his sphere, not in wilfulness or malice, but calmly and deliberately.

And for the same reason he must be given an opponent who is

1) 1.291 is one of a number of single lines in the text which are defective.

worthy of him. The space and the care which the alliterative poet has devoted to drawing the character of the adversary, and describing the impregnability of his stronghold, make it clear that he realised the importance of preparing a proper moral and psychological basis for the scenes of action which follow. The imprisonment of Girflet is an adequate reason for the original attack, but the conflict between the spirit of proud independence shown by the lord of the castle and Arthur's indomitable determination to break that spirit is, on human grounds, much more interesting. The issue is, in addition, much more explicitly stated than in the original version, and at a point where it prepares effectively for the introduction of the action whose significance largely depends upon the moral spirit in which it is undertaken.

The effectiveness of the passage is, however, somewhat marred by an oversight on the part of the redactor. His choice of a pilgrimage to replace the rescue of Girflet as the purpose of Arthur's journey proves embarrassing when the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux arises on the way. A secular mission could have been postponed or forgotten at this point, but the pilgrimage cannot be neglected. To prevent a serious interruption in the narrative thread it is hurriedly dismissed, with a brevity which reveals how little significance the poet attached to the religious motivations of Arthur's journeys:-

The roy rial raid withoutin resting,
And socht to the siete of Criste, our the salt flude.
With mekil honour in erd he maid his offering,
Synne huskit hame the samyne way that he before yude.

(11.301-4.)

And so the narrative returns to the Chastel Orgueilleux, the centre of interest throughout the remainder of the poem.

(312-544 : 113b.) After a section in which there is only a vague resemblance between the French text and the much more elaborate English

redaction, the two versions come together again at the point where Arthur and his company set up camp before the Chastel Orgueilleux:-

Après d'un petit boys d'oliviers eurent ja tendu en
ung pré ceulx qui devant furent venus les tentes et
les pavillons du roy ou ils dressèrent forces loges.

(fol.113b.)

But where the French text is briefly factual the English poem is elaborately descriptive:-

Thai plantit down ane pailyeoun, vpon ane plane lee,
Of pall and of pillour that proudly was picht,
With rapis of rede gold, rials to see,
And grete ensenyes of the samyne, semly by sight;
Bordouris about, that bright war of ble,
Betin with brint gold, burely and bright;
Frenyeis of fyne silk, fretit ful fre
With deir dyanonthis bedene, that dayntely was dicht.

(11.312-19.)

There can be no practical reason for this elaboration. The tents of Arthur are equally unimportant in both versions,--at best a human detail intended to give reality to the action which follows. But the alliterative passage is decorative rather than realistic. It suggests description undertaken for its own sake, for the pleasure which the poet takes in the richness of effect given by the adjectival profusion of alliterative verse in such a context. Yet it is not out of place here: excessive and unadvised elaboration of the physical background is, oddly enough, more in keeping with the heightened atmosphere of the romance than the flat and factual tone of the French prose.

Once the camp has been established both versions turn to the preparations for combat. So far as the French text is concerned these are entirely confined to the besieged party within the Chastel Orgueilleux:-

Mais pas longtemps en ce lieu ne sejournerent que au
chateau ont ung cor sonné si grand qu'onques nul
grigneur ne voit, car bien six lieues a l'entour fust
le son de ce cor ouï, et si tost que sonner l'ouïrent,
le roy commence a demander a Brandelis se point sçavoit
pour quoy le cor sonné avoit. Et luy dist sans atarger
que ja en toute la contree estoit connu que le chateau

Just de ceste cest environné, et que de ceste heure seroient
mis et pendus trois mille sceus aux murs du chasteau. Et
ainsy comme Brandelin ceste chose au roy comptoit, voient
à dextre venir et aporter à la muraille plus de trois mille
confanons, ou lances confanées, faictes de diverses façons et
illecques d'escus avoit aux creneaux par dehors pendus.
Après ce virent chevalliers sur destriers et sur palefrois
des foreste tout à plain loisir et à grand route vers le
chasteau venir, ou ils entrèrent. (fol. 111b.)

This represents almost the total content of the French text at this point,--less than a single column of print. On this basis the English redactor has built something very much more elaborate. He provides seven stanzas describing the preparations for battle, in which there are only occasional reminiscences of the original in points of detail. Supporters pour into the castle from all sides:-

Many sage our the way to the site socht;
Schipmen our the streame that stithil full straucht,
With elain wappyns, I wys, that was for warre wrought,
(11.459-61.):

banners and shields are displayed:-

Ilke souterane his ensenys shewin has thair;
Perly fays was the fauld, flecharit and faw
With gold and goulis in greyns,
Schynand schairly and schaynes;
The some, as cristall as cloyas,
In scheldis thair schaw. (11.474-9.)

while a horn sounds to announce the beginning of conflict. But even where there are echoes from the French text the original idea is usually transformed, both in scale and in interpretation. For example, the horn sounded from the castle and the shields hung upon the walls are strangely associated in a scene which, though it is quite in keeping with the preparatory function of the original has no counterpart in the French version:-

As the reverend roy was rekend vpon raw,
With the rout of the Round Tabill, that was richest,
The king crounit with gold, coudly to know,
With reverend baronis and beirnis of the best,
He hard ane bugill blast brye and ane loud blaw,
As the seyaly some allit to the rest.
A gowt gais to ane gret, glesand to schaw,

Turnit to ans his toure, that tight was full trest;
 Ane helme of hard steill in hand has he hynt,
 Ane scheld wrought all of weir,
 Semyt wale vponne fair;
 He grippit to ans grete speir,
 And furth his wais wynt.

"Quhat signifyis yone schene schoild?" said the seneour,
 "The luffly helme and the lance, all ar away,
 The brym blast that he blew with ane stevin stour?"
 Than said sir Spynagrus with speche: "The uth call I say.
 Yone is ane freik in his force, and fresch in his flour,
 To se that his schire wald be zicker of assay;
 He thinkis prove to prove, for his paramour,
 And prik in your presens, to purchase his pray."
 (11.519-39.)

Elaborations of this sort seem, at first sight, purposeless and difficult to explain. But there is reason to believe that the redactor has spun some 230 lines from less than a column in his source with a single end in view: in order to impress upon the reader the magnitude of the task which Arthur has undertaken in attempting to subdue an opponent whose power, resource, authority and resiliency are apparent in every detail mentioned. The description of military might is the most obvious way of achieving this effect, and the alliterative poet spares no effort in building up an impressive picture of the forces of chivalry marshalling within the castle:-

Be it was mylmerne and mare, merkit on the day,
 Schir Golegros wery men, menakful of myght,
 In greis and garatouris, grathit full gay,
 Seyne soore of schoildis thair schaw at ane sight;
 Ane helme set to ilk schoild, siker of assay,
 With fel lane on left, lemand ful light.
 Thus flourit thair the fore front, thair fays to fray,
 The frekis, that war fundin ferre and forsey in fight.
 Ilk knyght his cunsaunce kithit full cleir;
 Thair names writtin all thare,
 Quhat berne that it bare,
 That ilk freke quhare he fare
 Might wit quhat he weir.
 (11.480-92.)

And it is important, in view of later developments, to note that in the English work these preparations are not confined to the display of

knighly shields and banners. Some of them are of a purely practical and realistic order, which would probably have surprised and shocked the readers of chivalric romances:-

That bent bowis of bras braithly within;
 Palloris paised to pass,
 Capand gunys of brass,
 Grundis garyeis their wass,
 That mail ful gret dys. (11.462-6.)

Despite his reliance upon a French source, the exercise of his creative imagination has led the English poet to introduce contemporary details in a way which was apparently impossible for the redactor of the Sixteenth century prose print in re-working the Twelfth century romance.

The implication of such descriptive passages as a prelude to combat would be obvious to the contemporary reader, but the English author, with his tendency to underline every effect and to state every issue as clearly and directly as possible, makes another attempt to be still more explicit. At the sight of the elaborate defensive preparations within the castle Arthur expresses his admiration at the strength and resolution of his adversary, but renews his determination to subdue him:-

"Yone is the warliost wane," said the wise king,
 "That ever I viat in my walk, in all this world wyde;
 And the straitest of staf, with riches to ring,
 With vnchasit berrys bergane to abide;
 May same do thame on deir with vadoyng;
 Yone house is so huge his, fra harme thame to hide.
 Yit sal I mak thame varufe, forcutis resting,
 And reue thame their rentis, with routis full ride,
 Thought I wuld fynd thame new notis for this ix year;
 And in his awne presence
 Heir sal I mak residence,
 Bot he with force mak defence,
 With strength me to steir? (11.493-506.)

One of his followers, Sir Slynagros, - still speaking with the special knowledge of the castle and its defenders which he derives from Bran

de Lis, though there is nothing in the French to suggest this particular passage—, answers him in terms which imply a rebuke of his boastful eagerness—

"What nedis," said Spingrus, "sic notis to nevin,
Or ony termis be turnit, I tell you treuly?
For thair is agis in yone mail wil set vpon sevin,
Or thay be wraip it, I wis, I wares you ilk wy.
Gane hardiar of hartis vndir the hevin,
Or thay be dantit with dreid, erar will thair do;
And thair with men vpon mold be machit full evin,
Thair salbe fundin right force, and full of chivalrie.
Schir, ye ar in your maiste, your mayne and your myght,
Yit within thair dais thre,
The sicker suth sall ye se,
What kin men that thair be,
And how thair dar fight!" (11.506-18.)

And again it should be noted that the forthcoming conflict is spoken of in sternerly realistic terms, not as an occasion for chivalric display but as a battle to the death. In this respect also the English author is preparing for a major change later in the narrative, when his redaction is to differ fundamentally from the original version.

These preliminaries to combat would, one imagines, be sufficient to make the redactor's point,—that the forces of Arthur are here matched against worthy opponents, of whom a member of the Round Table can speak with admiration. But the point has so far been made almost wholly in general terms, with reference to the defenders of the castle as a body and with regard merely to military preparations. But the English author had sufficient subtlety to realise that in characterising the opposing forces, these were not the only elements to which he must pay attention. His source postulated not only a conflict between the company of the Round Table and the defenders of the Chastel Orgueilleus but, more important, a personal struggle between Gawain and the lord of the castle. He realised that this personal conflict, though it was to take place on a

physical level as a contest of military prowess, was primarily a clash of chivalric personalities which would determine not merely who was the stronger warrior but who was the more perfect knight, displaying the greatest nobility of character and refinement of courtly behaviour. Having already reminded his readers of Gawain's traditional character in the incident at the castle of Yder le Bel, the redactor found it unnecessary to add much to his original in this connection. But that Gawain may later be matched with an opponent worthy of him the redactor has provided ten stanzas in which there is only one theme: the courage, prowess, and nobility of the lord of the castle.

At a council of the Round Table it is decided to send an embassy demanding that those within the castle submit to Arthur, and Gawain, Yvain and Lancelot are chosen for the mission. Before they ride off Sir Spynagros warns them how they must behave, - speaking once more in the character of the knowledgeable Brun de Lis, and, in this instance also, without variant from the French text:-

Spynagros than spekis, said: "Lordingis in le,
I rede ye tant treuly to my teching;
For I know yowr hault berne better than ye,
His land, and his lordschip, and his leving.
And ye ar thre in this thade, thriward oft in thrang;
War al your strenthis in one,
In his grippis and ye gane,
He wald oureun yowr ilkane;
Tone sterne is as strang.

And he is said on sold mak as ane child,
Blith and bousum that berne as byrd in his bour,
Fayr of fell and of face as flour vafild,
Wondir stalwart and strang, to strive in ane steur.
Thairfore makly with mouth rel to that myld,
And mak him ane manance, bot al mesoure.
Thus with trety ye cast yon trew vadre tyld,
And faynd his frendschip to fang with fyne favour.
It hynderis neuer for to be heyndly of speche;
He is ane lord riale,
Ane soverayn souerane in sale,
Ane wourthy wy far to wale,
Throu all this varid reche!

(11.341-62.)

Praise of this kind comes all the more effectively from one of the opposing party, and the effect is reduplicated by the lord's behaviour when the three ambassadors appear before him. They are received with ceremonious courtesy, and Gawain delivers their embassy, giving the redactor an opportunity to comment upon his character and deportment:-

Then schir Gawyne the gay, gude and gracijs,
 That ever was beildit in blis, and bounte embrasit,
 Joly and gentill, and full chensailrus,
 That never poynt of his prise was fandin defasit,
 Agir and ertand, and ryght antorus,
 Illuminat with lerte, and with lufe lasit,
 Holis of the message to schir Golagrus.
 Before the riale on raw the renk was nocht rasisit;
 With one elene contenance, curly to know,
 Said: "Our souerane Arthour
 Gretis the with honour,
 Has said us thre as mediatour,
 His message to schaw. (11.339_401.)

There follows an elaborate exchange between Gawain and the lord, - here called Sir Golagrus -, couched in terms of mutual respect and expressed in highly-wrought phraseology, stiff with alliteration, full of formal eloquence. Gawain praises the nobility of Arthur whom kings are proud to serve, speaks of the high repute of Golagrus, and demands his friendship and allegiance on his master's behalf. With equal eloquence Sir Golagrus replies:-

Then said the kyte of the sail, with oad sembland:
 "I thank your gracious grete lord and his gude will;
 Had ever laid of this land, that had bene leward,
 Said any foute before, freik, to fulfil,
 I wuld sickirly myself be consentand,
 And seek to your souerane, seynly on wyll.
 Ben hail our doughty alderis has bene endurand,
 Thriandly in this thede, vnochargit as thril,
 If I, for obeisance or beist, to bondage me bynde,
 I war wourthy to be
 Ringit heigh on ans tre,
 That ilk creature might se,
 To waif with the wynd.

Bot saund my sanyseury fra subiection,
 And my lordseip va-lasyt, withoutin legiance,

All that I can to yone king, cunly with crown,
 I call preif all my pane to do hym plesance;
 Baith with body and beill, bowsum and boun,
 Hym to manek on wold, withoutin manance.
 Bot northir for his sanyseoury, nor for his summeoun,
 Na for dreid of na dede, na for na distance,
 I will nocht bow me ane bak for borne that is borne;
 Quhill I may my wit wald,
 I think my fredome to hald,
 As my eldaris of ald
 Has done me beferme! (11.428-53.)

In these two stanzas Golagrus paints his own character,—courteous, noble, courageous and calmly independent—with greater effect than the remaining 200 lines of the passage.

The amount of attention which the English poet pays to the character of Golagrus seems, at first sight, out of all proportion and contrasts strangely with the brief references in the French text, which provide no hint for this elaborate characterisation. It is only when the redaction is studied as a whole that the reason for this discrepancy in scale becomes apparent. The English author is here replacing material from his source of which he makes no use, and for which some substitute is necessary if his redaction is to have force and meaning. His omission of all references to the imprisonment of Girflet has already forced him to supply another reason for the attack upon the Chastel Orgueilleus,—Arthur's desire to win submission from a free knight who has never owed allegiance to anyone. If this substitute is to be more than an empty pretext submission must be formally demanded and formally denied as it is in this passage: any attack without such a formality would reflect the greatest discredit upon the honour of the Round Table. But, as we shall see at the end of the poem, this matter of allegiance was more than a mere formal pretext in the eye of the English redactor, and his treatment of it here is in accordance with the significance

which it held for him. More important, however, is the preparation made here for the later occasion of unsealing upon which the whole plot turns in the original version. In the French text Gawain ultimately spares his opponent and shares defeat in order to save the life of a lady, in love with the lord of Chaute! Orgueilleux, who will die if he is shared. But the English redactor knows nothing of love: in his version the lady never appears, and Gawain makes his chivalrous sacrifice in order to save the life of a noble opponent who refuses to choose between death and dishonour. It is at this point in the redaction that both Gawain and the reader are made aware of this nobility of character in the future adversary, and it was no doubt for this reason that the English poet made Gawain the bearer of the royal demand to Golagrus and the witness of his resolute refusal to submit.

In view of the magnitude of the sacrifice which Gawain is later called upon to make this character-sketch, upon which his respect for Golagrus is based, could scarcely be over-drawn. But even in view of the dual function which it fulfils and the scope and importance of the excised material which it replaces, the extent of the passage, the reiterated glorification of Golagrus,--through the reports of Sygngres, in Arthur's grudging admiration, and even in the nobility of his own words to Gawain--, seems altogether excessive. Something at least of this excess may be due to the alliterative poet's pleasure,--evident at other points in the redaction--, in the conduct of elaborate and formal conversations. Gawain's mission to the court of Golagrus provides a splendid opportunity for the composition of courteous speeches in which the stately rigidity of alliterative verse, slow-moving yet emphatic, is an advantage rather than a defect. Had the poet not welcomed this opportunity to

display his mastery of the medium in such a context the desired effect might well have been achieved with more economy. The speeches are not impossible or unsuccessful in themselves, but their elaboration contrasts rather oddly with the way in which the narrative is sketched elsewhere, when the redactor is drawing his material from the French source and not from his own imagination.

(945-766 : 113b - 115c.) Preliminaries having been completed,--at great length in the English text, within a few lines in the French--both versions proceed to describe the conflict before the Chastel Orgueilleux. In the Perceval Continuation the nature of the combat is at once made clear when, at a feast in Arthur's pavillion, Lucan requests that the joust of the first day should be his:-

"Sire, faist il, je vous prie et requiers me octroier et donner la premiere jouste du matin, car a cause de mon office me appartient. Et le roy respondi: "Ja, faist il, ne refuseray la premiere requeste qui m'a esté en ce pais demandee, et pour ce de bon cuer vous l'octroier."
(fol. 113c.)

The issue is to be tried in a series of individual combats between a knight of the Round Table and one of the defenders of the castle. The whole matter is to be formally arranged and Arthur's companions urge the king to allot to each his day of combat:-

Et par esbatement chascun au roy disoit mots joyeux, en luy requerant par deduit qu'il assiet a chascun son jour pour hors de crainte les geoter. Et le roy dist que non fera, mais en ceste peur les tieendra et que ainsi il luy vient a gré.
(fol. 113c.)

When Lucan rides out as the first champion of the Round Table it is not, therefore, to an open battlefield, but to the lists where the rules of the tournament hold good:-

.....et entra au pré de la bataille, qui ung lieu ordonné estoit, pour combattre a tous ceulx qui bataille queroient. Or vous fault il entendre que aux quatre quarrés de ce pré furent quatre oliviers plantes, qui du camp la divisent

finisoient et monstrerent. Et estoit ung tel edict faict,
que celluy qui le premier trespasse les bournes des quatre
oliviers estoit pour recreu jugé et tenu depuis qu'il est
au camp entré. (fol.113d.)

There is nothing whatsoever to correspond to this in the English version. In place of the courtly preliminaries Arthur merely appoints one of his followers to meet the knight who is seen riding out from the castle. And when they meet there is no suggestion that it is within the lists or under the rules of the tourney. These omissions do not seem significant in themselves: they are on a par with similar instances in which the redactor appears anxious to press on with the action to the neglect of elements which are merely preparatory or incidental to it. Only later, in the light of the general treatment of combat in the alliterative poem, will it become apparent that these particular details have been omitted because they conflict with the redactor's whole conception of the struggle which occupies the greater part of his composition and monopolises his attention from this point onward.

So far as the French text is concerned the joust of the first day, in which Lucan encounters an unnamed knight from the Chastel Orgueilleux, sets a pattern which is to be repeated on subsequent occasions:-

Quant Lucain en ce pré fust entré, gueres n'atendit
longuement que moult fierement voit venir hors du
chasteau ung chevallier, qui sur ung grand cheval sceit,
de toutes armes bien armé, qui au pré s'en vient grand
alleure ou en ce lieu sans atarger. Les lances sur les
arrestz mirent, puis brocherent des esperons; si est l'ung
vers l'autre venu, lesquels en leurs cascs grand coups
donnerent. Le chevallier premierement si durement Lucain
farust que sa lance en pieces volla. Mais bien sceust le
bouteillier recouvrer, lequel par si grand force l'a
rencontré que jus de son cheval esmy le pré l'a porté.
Et quant il le veist abatu, le destrier print et s'en
retourna, et l'autre au pré tout quoy laissa a pied,
desgarni de monture. (fol.113d.)

Though by force of arms the day is Lucan's he has committed a technical fault which deprives him of victory: Bran de Lis explains that had he

brought his defeated opponent to Arthur's camp as a prisoner the castle would have surrendered immediately. At once Bagen rushes back to the field where he is met by a new champion, overpowered, and led away to join Girflot in imprisonment within the castle. It is not surprising to find that the English author takes no notice of this technicality or its outcome. In the original the whole matter is extremely vague: Brande Lis does not explain why the Chastel Orgueilleux should surrender because the first of its champions is led off the field in defeat, and when he himself brings a beaten adversary into Arthur's camp on the following day there is no mention of a general surrender, and the contest continues on subsequent days. The redactor was well advised to ignore such an unnecessary and pointless simplification. He concentrates instead upon the practical details of the combat, but even in this connection his version bears only the vaguest resemblance to the French. In his text the engagement opens with a duel between Sir Gaudifeir as representative of the Round Table and Galiot who rides out from the castle. This is only the first of several combats in which the names of the original protagonists have been replaced by others, or supplied where they are lacking in the French. The issue is a general one and will be discussed as such at a later point. An alteration of more immediate significance affects the nature of the combat itself. Lucan's meeting with his opponent is a formal joust, described in vague general terms without individual details of arms or action, and it ends without injury to either party. The encounter between Gaudifeir and Galiot is, by contrast, a much more serious affair:-

Gaudifeir and Galiot, in gleam and steel wedded,
 As glaives glowed on gleid, grimly that ride;
 Fend'ir sternly that steir on their stent stedis
 Athir borne fra his blent borne was that tide.

Thai rusehit vp rudly, quha sa right redie;
 Out with suerdis thai swang fra their schalk side;
 Their with wraithly thai wrik, thai wourthy in vedis,
 Hewit on the hard steill, and hurt thame in the hide.
 Sa wondir freschly thai frekis frusehit in feir,
 Throw all the harnes thai made,
 Baith birny and breist-plade,
 Phairin waggynis outh wado,
 Wit ye but weir.

Thus thai faught vpone fold, with ane fel fair,
 Quhill athir borne in that breth bokit in blude;
 Thus thai mellit on mold, ane xyle way and maire,
 Wraithly wroht, as thei war witlese and wode;
 Baith thai segis forsooth, sadly and sair,
 Thought thai war astonait, in that stour stithly thai stude.
 The fecht sa felly thai fang, with ane fresch fair,
 Quhil Gaudifeir and Galiot baith to grund yhude.
 Gaudifeir gat vp agane, throu Goddis grete mightis;
 Abone him wichtely he wan,
 With the craft that he can;
 Thai louit God and sanct An,
 The king and his knightis (11.557-82.)

The violence of this combat, made all the more evident by the vigour of the alliterative medium, suggests the reality of a duel to the death rather than the make-believe of the joust. The imaginative detail in which it is described seems to reflect a personal interest on the part of the poet, an interest which extends to the technicalities of the engagement, the power of the blows exchanged and the violence of their effect, and is not limited merely to its ultimate outcome. Though on this occasion the result is not fatal to either party, blood is shed on both sides, and the general contrast with the French version is sufficient to suggest that the redactor's intention differed widely from that of the original author. Yet this passage merely hints at a fundamental distinction between the two versions which grows more extreme from this point onwards: a contrast between the treatment of warfare in the French text, with its formalised description of individual combats constructed according to the conventions of the joust, and the violent multiple engagements of the

English redaction, which result in bloodshed, injury and death.

In the Perceval Continuation this phase of the action covers three days: on the first Lucan has the joust and is eventually taken prisoner; on the second Bran de Lis represents the Round Table and leads his opponent to Arthur in defeat; while on the third day Kay is driven beyond the limits of the field and forfeits his horse to the enemy. The English author eventually makes some use of the incident of the third day, though not at this point in his narrative. This apart, his redaction bears only the loosest resemblance to the original. Of the first two days he makes four: on the first, already described, Gaudifeir defeats and captures Caliot, the representative of the besieged party; on the second Sir Hannald of Arthur's company meets Sir Rigal of Rone, and both are killed; on the third each side sends out four knights, Lyonel, Iwain, Bedwar and Gyromalance of the Round Table engaging Louys, Edmond, Bantellias and Sanguel, until two knights are captured on one side, and on the other one is captured and one killed; finally, on the fourth day, each side puts five champions in the field, Agalus, Edmond, Mychin, Moligor and Hew representing the besieged in combat with Gador, Gwales, Iwell, Myreot and Emell, and each loses two prisoners to the other party.

It should be apparent, even from this outline, that the contrast between the French and English versions in their treatment of combat

1) Vide infra, pp. 368-70.

2) The problem presented by this spate of names in the English text is discussed below, vide, pp. 401-3. It should be noted here that 'Emell' as it occurs in l. 749 is only doubtfully a proper name. The whole episode suggests that the redactor was careful to balance the forces engaged on either side: the failure of a copyist to notice his intention may account for the confusion over the name of the fifth knight in Arthur's force. For a full explanation of the problem see P.J. Amours, op.cit., p. 275.

grows more extreme as the engagement proceeds. In the Perceval Continuation the jousts of the second and third days follow the formal pattern of the first: Arthur rises, hears mass, breakfasts, and attends the arming of a single knight who rides out to meet the champion of the besieged party. Neither episode contains anything distinctive, either in incident or in description to differentiate it from the earlier passage. They are comparatively brief and in both the formal, ritualistic aspects of the affair receive more attention than the duel or its outcome. The ceremonial of arming the knight is the only thing which has moved the French author to attempt description in any detail:-

.....et pendant qu'au manger estoient, a ung chamberlan apporté ung haultbert aussey blanc q'ung cigne, que dessus ung tapis a mis, et ung aultre a puis apporté les greves et les genouilliers, que chaussa le seigneur de Lis. Quant prime au chasteau fust sonnee, se feist de toutes pieces armer, puis vestit une cotte d'armes de velours jaune drapée et liée de blanc. Et ce fait, le roy en personne luy laça la ventaille et Gauvain luy posa le heaume sur le chief, et puis après le roy Ydior luy saint l'espee, des meilleures que jamais furent trempées.
(fol. 114c - fol. 114d.)

The narrative of combat, lacking even this degree of descriptive individuality, follows the same formalised pattern in each case: the knights charge, break their lances upon each other and are unhorsed, but rise, draw swords, and fight on foot until one or the other is overcome and yields. The victory in each case is a bloodless one, and observance of the technicalities of jousting play as large a part as military skill, -as Kay discovers to his cost:-

Puis le chevalier se basta quant son espee rompue appercent, que a force de le poursuivre, Keux par force emmena hors les bornes qui au quatre oliviers tenoient et estoient aux quarés du pré.
(fol. 115b.)

The siege of the Chastel Orgueilleux, as the French author emphasises it, is an elaborate game, played out with all ceremony, in an area specially designated for the purpose, and according to a code of behaviour tacitly

accepted by both sides, and, apparently, so familiar to the contemporary reader as to require no explanation. The issue between the two parties is treated seriously, Arthur aiming at the surrender of the castle, but though it is to be decided by a trial of strength and skill it is not made a matter of life and death. The incident is handled by the prose author with his usual competence, but there is nothing to suggest that it had any particular significance for him, beyond its practical function in his story. And, for the most part, his attention is concentrated upon the ceremonial and ritualistic rather than the purely military aspects of the engagement.

Everything in the alliterative version combines to suggest that the attitude of the English redactor was in direct contrast. The element of the joust, apparent in his account of the duel between Gaudifeir and Galiot, can barely be detected in the narrative of the engagement upon the second, third and fourth days. Only the limitation of the forces involved and the watching of representative champions from the two sides, distinguishes it from general warfare. It is still, as in the French, a judicial combat, but of a more sternly realistic kind; a trial of skill, decided, not on technical grounds, but by death or serious injury. And, above all, it is characterised by a violence so extreme and so forcefully conveyed that the prose narrative seems, by comparison, artificial, colourless and lacking in action.

Such a summary as this might lead anyone familiar with the general practice of Middle English redactors in dealing with French originals to suspect that the author of Colagrus and Gawain, failing to appreciate his source, has merely coarsened and spoiled it by concentrating on the element of violence to the neglect of other, more subtle, issues in the French. This would be a mistaken view. Those elements which

are preliminary or incidental to combat, and on which the French author dwells, have neither been neglected nor misinterpreted by the alliterative poet. He too realised the importance of arms and armour as adjuncts of the knight, and he has described the arming of Sir Rannald in some detail:-

The deir dight him to the deid, be the day dew;
His birny and his basnet, burnist full bene;
Baith his horse and his geir wes of ane hale hew,
With gold and goulis an gay graithit in gren;
Ane schene scheild and ane schaft, that scharly was sched;
Thre ber-bedis he beir,
As his aldaris did air,
Subik beirnis in Britane wair,
Of his blude bled. (11.600-8.)

This is in no sense a reproduction of the arming of Bran de Lis in the original: it is the quality and splendour of the arms, and the heraldic warrant of their wearer's noble ancestry, which interest the English redactor, not the mere ceremonial of arming. And elsewhere in this episode he shows that for him the battle is not merely a formal exchange of blows, but an intimate reality whose importance and gravity are reflected in the emotional reactions of the onlookers. When Sir Rannald and Sir Rigal kill each other he supplies a comment, for which, naturally, there is no warrant in his sources:-

All the bernys on the bent about that beheild,
For pure sorow of that sight thai sight vnsound.
Schire teris schot fra schalkis, schene vndir scheild,
Quhen thai foundrit an fel fey to the grund;
Baith their hartis can brist, braithly but boild,
Thair wes na staluart vnsoneit, so stern wes the stound!
(11.637-42.)

Passages of this kind represent a refinement upon the original and show that, despite his preoccupation with the violence of combat the alliterative poet was not so insensitive as to ignore other, more human, aspects of warfare.

But it is true that, despite their significance, such elements

occupy only a small proportion of the 220 lines which the English redactor has devoted to the opening phases of the battle. They are largely submerged in the reiterated and minutely detailed description of physical violence which occupies the poet's attention to the virtual exclusion of everything else. It is in his treatment of this element that the English author appears most original and most independent of his French source. Even here, however, a vague general resemblance to the original can be traced. The combat serves the same practical function in the development of the plot, and individual engagements follow the same basic pattern: the knights charge against each other, break their lances and are unhorsed, but draw their swords and fight upon foot to a conclusion. But there the resemblance ends. Where the French author has sketched in the general outlines of each engagement in conventional terms, leaving it to the reader's imagination to supply the details of something which was a commonplace of contemporary life and literature, the English redactor gives a minute description of the action which leaves little or nothing to the imagination. More significantly, where the prose version contains a somewhat brief and general outline which might be paralleled in a score of contemporary romances, French and English alike, the alliterative poem supplies something fresh and original, bearing the signs of imaginative creation and exploiting the resources of the medium to the full. The violence of action is described in intimate detail:-

Athir laught has their lance, that leryt so light;
 On twa stedis thai straid, with one sterne schiere.
 Togiddir freschly thai frekis fruschit, in fay;
 Their speris in splendris sprent,
 On scheldis schonkit and schent,
 Ruin our thair hedis went,
 In feild fir away.

Thai lufly ledis belife lightit on the land,
 And laught out suerdis, lufly and lang;
 Their stedis stakkerit in the stour, and stude stummerand,
 Al to-stiffillit and stonayt, the strakis war sa strang!
 Athir berne braithly bet with ane bright brand;
 On fute freschly thai frekis feghtin thai fang;
 Thai hewit on hard steil, hartly with hand,
 Quhil the spaldis and the sparkis spedely out sprang.
 Schir Rannald raught to the renk ane rout wes vnryde;
 Clenely in the collair,
 Fifty mailyeis and mair
 Buin of the schuldir he schair,
 Ane wound that wes wyde. (11.615-34.)

Inevitably, the same features recur again and again: spears are splintered, swords broken, helmets cleft and mail shorn away. But this repetition is as much part of the general effect as the regular iteration and marked stress of the alliterative verse. By skilful variation of a limited vocabulary the poet has been able to continue the same vigorous description over many stanzas without allowing the effect to become monotonous:-

Their riche birnys thai bet derfly with dynt,
 Hewis down in grete haist, hartly with hand.
 Thai mighty men vpon mold ane riale course maid,
 Quhill clowis of olene mail
 Hoppit out as the haill;
 Thay beirnys in the bataill
 Sa bauldly thai baid!

Thai bet on sa bryimly, thai beirnys on the bent,
 Bristis birneis with brandis burnist full bene;
 Throu thair schene scheildis thair schuldiris var schent,
 Fra schalkis schot schire blude our scheildis so schene;
 Ryngis of rank steill rattillit and rent,
 Gomys grisly on the grund granis on the grene.
 The roy ramyt for reuth, richist of rent,
 For cair of his knightis cruel and kene,
 Sa wondir freschly thair force thai frest on the feildis!
 Sa huge wes the melle,
 Wes nane sa sutell couth so
 Quhilk gome suld gouern the gre,
 Bot God that al weildis.

The wyis wrought vthir grete wandreth and weuch,
 Wirkand woundis full wyde with wapnis of were;
 Helmys of hard steill thai batterit and heuch,
 In that hailsing thai hynt grete harmys and here;
 All to-turnit thair entyre, traistly and tewch,
 Burnist bladis of steill throw birneis thay bere;

Sohort suerdia of seheith smertly thay dreuch,
 Athir freik to his fallow, with fellonne affere;
 Throw platis of polist steill thair poyntis can pase.
 All thus thai threw in that thrang
 Stalwart strakis and strang;
 With daggaris derfly thay dang,
 Thai doughtyis on dase. (11.680-712.)

It would be difficult to imagine any description of battle more strongly contrasted with the brief, urbane, and somewhat detached version of the French text. The full significance of the contrast is obvious only when the process of redaction is viewed as a whole, but this passage is crucial in that the atmosphere of military violence established here dominates the English poem to its conclusion, leaving more and more pronounced as the work proceeds.

¶ : 115c - 116d.) In the French text, however, the engagement is interrupted at this point by an episode of a very different kind. The judicial combat is broken off by the sound of bells within the castle walls:-

A tant sonnerent les cloches des eglises du chasteau que si grand bruit et noise font que l'on n'y eust ouï Dieu tonner. Et quant le roy eust ce son entendu, si tost s'enquist et demanda la cause de si grand sonnerie. Et adonc Brandelis respond: "Sire, faict il, je le vous diray. Il est aujourd'huy samedi, or puisqu'el est nonne passee, ne fera nul rien au chasteau, car bien vous dis qu'en ce lieu est plus honnoree la mere de Dieu et venerree qu'en nul lieu" (fol. 115c.)

As there will be no more jousting until after the holyday, Bran de Lis suggests that Arthur and his followers should spend the time in hunting. During the hunt Gawain is separated from the others and comes upon a tower in the forest, where, under a tree, he finds a knight so deeply sunk in dejection that he seems as though dead. When Gawain attempts to rouse him the strange knight threatens him violently and falls back into his melancholy stupor. Gawain leaves him and rides on through the wood:-

Mais pas n'eust demie lieue allé qu'il rencontra en son chemin une moult belle cointe damoiselle, dessus ung palefroy montee, le plus beau que pieça fust veu. Et estoit la housse de ce palefroy, le poitral, la resne et croupiere toute batue en or. Et eust la robe a l'advenant, en sa main ung fouet tenoit dont la poingnee d'or et d'ivire estoit, et les cordons tous de fil d'or et de soie, de quoy souvent en fiert le palefroy. (fol.116a.)

The lady is pressing on in haste when Gawain stops her:-

"Sire, faict elle, d'arrester ne ay je cure au moins a ceste heure, et pour ce laissez moy aller, car je vous die en verite que j'ay occis ung chevallier, le meilleur que fust sur la terre." "Et comment, luy a dist Gauvain, l'avez vous de voz mains occis?" "Ouy, sire, pour tout certain, car terme donné luy avoie de me rendre a luy a midy, et pour ce que luy ay menty, je l'ay sur terre trouvé mort; et n'avoit son pareil au monde!" (fol.116a - fol.116b)

Reassured that her knight is still alive and waiting for her near the tower, she passes on while Gawain returns to camp and recounts what he has seen. As usual, it is Bran de Lis who supplies the explanation:-

Et quant le seigneur de Lis l'oït, si dist au roy: "Sire, faict il, sachez bien que ce chevallier est celluy souldoyer tant riche, qui la riche mesniee maintient et qui tant est preux, vertueux et saige. Celle damoiselle tant syne, que pucelle et dame la clame, et le chevallier dist qu'il en mourra s'a son plaisir ne jouist d'elle. Il est certain que Dieu a donné et donne la grand force et de hardiesse, mais tant est de la pucelle espris que sans l'avoir il ne peult vivre!" (fol.116b.)

At this point a great procession pours out from the Chastel Orgueilleus to welcome home its master the Riche Soudoier and his amie, now re-united with him. That night there is great rejoicing within the walls:-

Une joye fust si très grande en ceste nuit dedans le chasteau que ne le scauroie exprimer tant y eust de luminaire de cyre aux murs et au tour des moustiers, sur les arbres et sur les cloches, que semble a ceulx qui sont dehors que le chasteau soit en feu enflambé. Grand bruit feirent menestriers de cors, tabours, flenttes et trompes, a jouer et mener doulx plaisir jusques a la minuict s'emploierent. (fol.116c.)

This is an episode of great importance, though its full significance does not become apparent until later, in the climax of the action,

-a climax for which this is an essential preparation. It introduces the heroine of the Chastel Orgueilleus adventure and the love-element which plays such a vital part in the French romance. The crisis of the French tale, when it comes, will be a crisis of love, the love of the Riche Soudoier for the unnamed lady. The sole function of this passage is to demonstrate forcefully and succinctly the extent of that love. Everything which we are told of the heroine, - the splendour of her appearance, the melancholy into which her lover is thrown by her absence and her fear that his disappointed love has killed him, the ceremony with which she is received by his followers and the rejoicing within the Chastel Orgueilleus, - is intended to suggest her worthiness and the honour in which she is held by the Riche Soudoier and everyone connected with him.

Of all this the English version knows nothing. No hunt interrupts the mounting crescendo of military violence in the alliterative poem, there is no heroine and no element of love either here or elsewhere in the redaction. All known texts of the First Continuation agree with the 1530 Print in including the hunting episode, and, as we shall see, there is evidence to suggest that it was also in the version known to the English redactor. His omission can, therefore, be accepted as deliberate. Its full significance will not become apparent until the crisis of the action is reached, a crisis which must, as a result of this omission, be fundamentally different from that in the French romance. This is the most important change made by the English author in adapting the original to his purpose and its repercussions can only be appreciated in full when the redaction is viewed as a whole.

As the redactor apparently decided to ignore the love element in his source, it is natural that he should make no use of what follows

in the French text. When the jousting is renewed Arthur accords the day to Yvain, who, after the usual formal engagement,--the charge, the breaking of lances, and the sword-fight on foot--eventually defeats the representative of the Chastel Orgueilleus and leads him prisoner to the royal camp. He reveals himself as a young Irish knight who has long served the amie of the Riche Soudoier:-

Et me feist mon sire yer chevallier pour l'amour et en
faveur de s'amie, et pour recompense de mon service me
octroya et donna le joust pour ce jour. Mais pour rien
ne l'eust octroie, se ma dame ne l'en priast.....(fol.116d.)

This, too, is clearly designed to show the great love and honour in which the lady is held by the Riche Soudoier, but here the theme begins to be woven into the general plot of the romance. When Gawain asks who will represent the besieged party in the joust of the following day, the Irish knight replies:-

"Sire, je sçay pour verité que demain joustera premier
monsire le Riche Souldoier, et vous en diray la maniere.
Leans ont ung establissement qu'au matin se lievent les
puelles, les damoiselles et les dames, et s'en viennent
aux murs regarder pour veoir se nul verront des voustres,
et celle qui le premier advise le chevallier estant au
pré, s'en va le sien amy armer incontinent, sans atarger.
Or est ainsy que ma dame toutes les manda au soir et si
leur commanda que pour l'amour d'elle nulle ne vouldist
premier que sa personne aux murailles monter ne au pré
regarder. Pour ce bien pourra estre ainsy de la jouste
que vous ay dist. (fol.116d.)

The passage is more important than may, at first sight, be apparent. It makes it clear that when the Riche Soudoier appears in the lists it will be by his lady's wish and through her agency. As a result the reader is conscious that, throughout the scene which follows, her eyes are on her knight and that she is, to some extent, responsible for what befalls him. The alliterative author's rejection of the love element, and consequent re-interpretation of the whole Chastel Orgueilleus episode, makes

such subtlety superfluous, and, like everything else connected with the heroine, it has disappeared without leaving any trace in the English version. (769-907 : 116d - 117b.) Uninterrupted by this interlude, the battle continues to its climax in the alliterative poem, the final engagement following closely upon that in which five members from each side take part. The lord of the castle takes the field by his own decision, angered at the capture of two of his followers:-

Than schir Golograss for greif his gray ene brynt,
 God wraith as the wynd, his handis can wryng.
 Yit makis he mery, mery quhassa mynt;
 Said: "I sal bargane ahyde, and ane end bryng;
 To morne, sickirly, my self sall seik to the feild!"
 (ll. 769-73.)

By this invention the English redactor gives continuity to his battle narrative and supplies the function of certain details omitted in the previous section of the original. That their omission was due to deliberate rejection on his part and not to a lacuna in his source is suggested by a minor feature which occurs here. In the First Continuation it is Gawain who initiates the new engagement: when he learns that the Riche Souldoier intends to take the field, he demands from Arthur the joust of the day, is granted it, arms himself and rides into the lists:-

Mais longuement n'y eust n'ad que au chasteau on feist un
 cor clerelement sonner au dessus de la maistresse tour, lequel
 si haultement sonna que toute la terre en frenist plus d'une
 grant lieue a l'environ, tant fort et parfaitement resonna.
 Adonc dist Messire Brandelis au roy: "Sire, faict il, sachez
 que briefvement verrés le Riche Souldoier venir tout armé a
 cheval. Car jamais le cor l'on ne sonne jusques a tant qu'il
 se veult armer. S'y ay bien au son entendu que maintenant
 il a ses esperons chaussés" (fol. 117a.)

This is not the first occasion in the French romance on which the horn has been a battle signal, and on at least one occasion (*vide supra*, pp. 341-3) the redactor has followed his source in using it as such. The bell, on the other hand, is used only as a prelude to the hunting scenes in the

French text, and it was, most probably, some memory of this which influenced the alliterative poet in giving his version of the present incident.

He buskit to ane barfray,
Twa smal bellis rang thay;
Than seynly Arthur can say,
Was schene vndir scheild.

"Quhat signifyis yone rynging?" said the ryale;
Than said Spynagros with speche: "Schir, sen speir,
That sall I tell yow with tong, treuly in taill.
The wy that weildis yone wane, I warn you but weir,
He thinkis his aune self shall do for his dail;
Is nane sa prouit in this part of pyth is his peir.
(11.774-83.)

Yet once more Sir Spynagros fills the role of Bran de Lis in explaining the usages of the Chastel Orgueilleux. But the redactor has extended his function far beyond the original, and with a specific purpose in view. He has replaced the formal ceremonial of the arming of the Riche Soudoier with a long panegyric (11.784-833) on the character of his English counterpart, Sir Golagrus. Spynagros has been heard in praise of Golagrus on previous occasions but now he concentrates upon the physical prowess and knightly skill of the adversary as the qualities most relevant to the engagement about to begin. He urges Gawain not to undertake the duel and Gawain, naturally, persists in his intention.

"Sen ye ar sa wourchipfull, and wourthy in were,
Demyt with the derrest, maist doughty in deid,
Yone berne in the battale wil ye nocht forbere,
For al the mobil on the mold, merkit to meid?
"Gif I de doughtely, the les is my dere,
Thocht he war Sampson himself, sa me Criste reid!
I forsaik nocht to fecht, for al his grete feir,
I do the weill for to wit, doutlese but dreid!
(11.804-11.)

The function of this lengthy interpellation clearly is to stress the magnitude of the task before Gawain by suggesting the great worth and high reputation of his opponent. These are the qualities which bear weight with Gawain in the decision which he is called upon to make at the climax of the poem, so that this passage, together with others in

the alliterative poem previously devoted to the praise of Golagrus, virtually duplicates the function of the hunting incident omitted by the English redactor. The contrast between the excised material and the panegyric of knightly virtues put into the mouth of Spynagros is indicative of the fundamental transformation effected by the redactor, which has altered the whole nature of the story.

The fact that such praise is voiced by a knight of the Round Table gives it added force, and Gawain's persistence in seeking the encounter with Golagrus reflects his own courage and resolution. But, for the most part, the redactor has been content to rely on the traditional character of Gawain and has not attempted to do for him what he has been at such pains to do for his adversary. In the original version, on the contrary, all attention is concentrated upon Gawain before the duel, and there is no attempt to characterise the Riche Soudoier; except in so far as his love for his amis is concerned. The French author follows Gawain through all the preliminaries to battle:-

.....messire Gauvain se leva, puis esveilla messire Yvain, lequel legierement feist lever. Puis s'en allerent privement desduire hors, a la rousee, parlant d'ugne chose et puis d'aulture. Et estoit ceste matinee si clere et si pure et si belle que ce fust pour se merveiller. Et en ceste rousee laverent leurs mains, les yeux et le visaige. Puis au pavillon se retirerent, ou se firent vestir de leur saies et de leurs manteaulx. Et pendant qu'ils entendirent a regarder les armes de Gauvain, le roy se leva, et test apres allerent la messe ouir, que le roy feist du Saint Esprit celebrer. Et, quant la messe fust chantee, au pavillon sont retournez. Et apres disner sans attendre a fait Gauvain ses armes apporter. (fol.116d - fol.117a.)

There is nothing at all unusual or striking in this passage or in the description of the arming of Gawain which follows it, but this type of relaxed and polished narrative, with details of human interest which give depth and reality to the story, is highly characteristic of the prose text,

and suggestive of the fundamental differences in narration and in atmosphere which distinguish it from the alliterative work. This conventional method of stressing Gawain's chivalric ability, by concentrating attention upon him in the formal ceremonies of arming and assembling the richness of his accoutrements, has no appeal for the English author. In so far as it exists in the English version it is applied to Gawain's opponents:-

With that mony fresch freik can to the feild found,
 With Golagras in his geir, grete of degre;
 Armyt in rede gold, and rubois sa round,
 With mony riche relikis, riale to se.
 Thair wes on Golagras, quhair he glaid on the ground,
 Frenyais of fine silk, fratit full fre.
 Apone starand stedis, trappit to the heill,
 Serty schalkis full schene,
 Cled in armour sa clene,
 No wy wantit, I wene,
 All stuffit in steill.

That berne raid on ane blonk, of ane blo quhite,
 Blyndit all with bright gold and beriallis bright;
 To tell of his deir weid war doutles delite,
 And also ter for to tell the travallis war tight.
 His name and his nobillay wes nocht for to nyte;
 Thair wes na bathill sa heich, be half ane fute hicht.

(11.884-900.)

Both by employing the conventional methods of the original in this way and by repeatedly inserting material which throws a favourable light on various aspects of Golagras' character, the redactor is building up a personality very different in many respects from the Riche Soudoier of the First Continuation. The fact that, here as elsewhere, he lays more stress upon the fundamental chivalric virtues than on the external trappings of rank and power is indicative of the role which he intends Golagras to play in the redaction.

Although the redactor's method of preparing for the crucial battle scene seems much more deliberate and on a more profound level than that of the French author, his version is awkwardly interrupted by an incident which, at first sight, seems entirely out of place here.

Before Gawain can come into the field, Sir Kay, losing patience, dashes out and encounters an unnamed knight from the castle, who eventually gives up his sword to the Seneschal and is led to Arthur in submission. This is clearly derived from the joust of the third day in the French text, ignored by the redactor in its original context (vide supra, (545-765 : 113b - 115c.)). But there the encounter ends in Kay's disgrace: unhorsed, he is driven beyond the limits of the lists, and, when he tries to convince his companions that the victory has been his, they laugh at him. It is difficult to understand why the redactor should have wished to recall this episode here, still more difficult to see why he has altered it to give Kay a victory instead of the humiliation in which the original adventure results. He can scarcely have made the change out of regard for the reputation of the Round Table or the character of Kay, since at this point his whole concern seems to have been to exalt the leader of the opposing party and, in the affair of the dwarf, he was content to follow his source in degrading Kay as a means of emphasising Gawain's courtesy. This effect might have been repeated here, throwing into relief his hero's courage and skill in arms by showing Kay's disgrace in the sphere where Gawain is about to succeed. This was clearly not the redactor's intention, and but for the skill and care with which the redaction as a whole is carried out, one might dismiss the incident as an oversight on his part, by which he missed an opportunity to improve upon his source. There is, however, one possible explanation of the alteration. Gawain is about to win a military victory which he forgoes out of regard for his adversary, appearing in the eyes of his Round Table comrades as a defeated knight. The difficulty of his decision and the magnanimity of his sacrifice will be heightened if he at first appears

to have failed where Kay, his inferior in other knightly qualities, has succeeded. Whether or not this interpretation is too subtle to have presented itself to readers of the alliterative poem it is impossible to tell, but the redactor is entitled to the assumption that his alteration was deliberate and related to his general treatment of the French work.

(908-1024 : 117b - 117c.) Both versions having prepared for the final duel,--the French largely on the material level, the English, to some extent at least, on the psychological plane,--the two opponents meet. The struggle follows much the same course in both texts: the knights charge, ~~break~~ break their spears on each other's shields, dismount and fight on foot, first one then the other having the advantage, until finally Gawain stands over his opponent helpless on the ground. But despite this similarity of outline the two versions differ yet more widely in their treatment of combat than in the earlier battle passages. The French account is quite brief and concerns itself largely with incidental features,--the watching crowds who line the walls of the Chastel Orgueilleux, the heat and thirst from which the combatants suffer, and so on. In the English poem, on the other hand, over a hundred lines are given to close and minutely detailed description of the fighting, in which the ability of alliterative verse to convey the violence of combat is exploited to the full. As before, attention is concentrated upon the crashing force of the blows struck, the shattering of armour, and the spurting of blood:--

With one bitand brand, burly and braid,
 Quhilk oft in battale had bene his bute and his belde,
 He leit gird to the goone, with greif that he had,
 And claiif throw the cantell of the close schelde.
 Thow birny and breist-plait and bordour it baid;
 The fulye of the fyne gold fell in the feild.
 The rede blude with the rout folowit the blaid,
 For all the wedis, I wise, that the wy waild,

Throw claspis of olene gold, and olowis sa cleir.
 Thair with schir Gologras the ayre,
 In nokill angir and ire,
 Alse farse as the fyre,
 Leit fle to his feir.

Sic dintis he delt to that doughty,
 Leit hym destanyt to danger and dreid;
 Thus wes he handillit full hait, that hawtane, in by,
 The scheld in countir he kest our his cleir weid;
 Hewit on hard steill woundir haistely;
 Gart beryallis hop of the hathill about hym on breid.
 (11.934-52.)

Inevitably, many of the effects employed in the earlier battle scenes are repeated, and again reduplicated even within this passage. Weapons are shattered, mail hewn away, and jewels scattered in the field:-

The tothir stertis and bak, the stern that wes stout,
 Hit schir Gawayne on the gere, quhil greuit wes the gay,
 Betit doun the bright gold and beryallis about;
 Scheddit his schire wedis scharnly away,
 That luffly lappit war on loft, he gart thame law lout.
 The sterne stakrit with the straik, and startis on stray,
 Quhill neir his resoun wes tynt, sa rude wes the rout!
 The beryallis on the land of brathoris gart light,
 Rubeis and saphair,
 Precious stanis that weir;
 Thus dresse thai wedis sa deir,
 That dantely wes dight. (11.987-98.)

These repetitions are redeemed by the skill and vigour with which the passage is handled, and they have the practical effect of showing that Gawain's victory over a worthy opponent is not easily won. But the whole episode is far in excess of anything the French author thought necessary: his interest lay purely in the outcome of the combat, while the English poet clearly welcomed it for its own sake and seized the opportunity to exploit his alliterative medium to the full.

(1035-1141 : 117c - 118a.) With the eventual victory of Gawain both versions reach the crisis of the action, the scene to which everything that has so far passed is preparatory. And it is here that the most significant distinction between the two texts, the key to their fundamental disparity, occurs. When Gawain calls on the Riche Soudeier to

submit to Arthur's authority or die, he is still dazed, and believing that his amie upon the castle wall must already have died at the sight of his overthrow, he does not wish to live. But once he has recovered and asked Gawain's name, he makes this request of him:-

"J'ay une amyë, laquelle plus ayme que moy. Se morte est, pour elle mourray si tost qu'en erray la nouvelle. Si vous requiers par voustre noblesse, par charité et courtoisie, que m'amie vive, me rendez par tel convenant que a droit ne a tort ne fera chose desormais contre vous homme qu'il soit au Chasteau Orgueilleux. Et s'il vous plaist ceste chose faire pour moy, que present je vous voudrois dire, par la foy vous fianceray faire tout au vouldoir du roy, et si n'auray ja chevallier que ne luy face sa foy au roy fiancer. Mais se m'amie le sçavoit, bien en pourroit de deuil mourir, laquelle ne croiroit jamais que par vous eusse esté conquis. Et pour ce je vous supplie que se le bien me vouldes faire duquel je vous requiers, que leans en la maistrasse tour vous plaise avecques moy venir. Si me ferez honneur ou devant m'amyë vous agenoillerez et luy direz qu'a elle vous rendez prisonnier et qu'au pré je vous ay conquis, ainsi la vie rendrez a moy et a ma bonne amyë. Et si la chose faire ne vouldes, je vous requiers de moy occire" (fol. 117d - fol. 118a.)

Gawain is faced with a dilemma: if he claims the victory he has won then Arthur's purpose of gaining the submission of the lord of Chastel Orgueilleux will be defeated. So great is the love between the Riche Soudoier and his amie that she will die at the news of his defeat, and, knowing her death, he will not yield merely to save his own life. But it is the claim of love rather than feudal duty which influences him in reaching his decision. And it is here that the importance of the hunting episode becomes apparent: recalling the scene in the forest Gawain is persuaded of the violence of the passion which unites the Riche Soudoier and his lady:-

Alors Gauvain se remembra du penser ou il trouva quant rencontra la damoiselle qui luy a dist que mort estoit en la forest dessous la tour, et sçait que de si grand amour l'ayme celle qu'elle mourroit si tost qu'elle sçauroit qu'il seroit honny ou vaincu. Pource a soy-mesmes advisé que trop grand cruaulté seroit se l'ung faisoit pour l'autre occire. (fol. 118a.)

So, on the understanding that his opponent will eventually submit to Arthur, he agrees to feign defeat and accompanies him to the Chastel Orgueilleux.

The corresponding scene in the English redaction clearly cannot be conducted on this basis. In view of earlier existences love cannot be urged as a reason for Gawain's self-sacrifice, and a new reason for his opponent's obduracy must be supplied. As in the original, this scene and, indeed, the entire romance, turns upon a single issue, but in the English version the heart of the matter is not love but honour. And the claims of honour are urged in many different forms. When Gawain calls on his defeated adversary to yield he refuses to dishonour his ancestors in order to save his own life:-

"Wee I neuer yit defoullit, nor fylit in fame,
 Nor name of my eldrie, that euer I hard nevin;
 Bot ilk berne has bene vnbuadin with blame,
 Ringand in rialte, and reuilit thame self evin.
 Sell neuer sege vadir son se me with schame,
 He luke on my lekame with light nor with levin,
 He name of the ayat degre haue noy of my name,
 I swere be ourthfast God, that settis all on sevin!
 Bot gif that vourship of were win me away,
 I trete for na fauour;
 Do furth thi deuoir;
 Of me gettis thou na more,
 Doubtes this day!" (11.1038-50.)

Gawain, anxious to spare him, tempts him to submit with promises of ducal rank in the court of Arthur, to which Colagrus replies that his honour is not to be bought:-

"Than war I woundir vouris,
 To purchase proffit for pris,
 Quhare schame ay euer lyis,
 All my leuing.

The sege that schrenkis for na schame, the schent nicht byn schen!
 That ware luffis his life than lois vpon ord;
 Sal neuer freik on fold, fromyt nor freynde,
 Gar me luke for aue luke, lawit nor lerd;
 For quhame with vourship call of this world wende,

Thair wil nane wyis, that ar wis, vary the ward,
 For any trefy may syde, I tell the the trefad,
 I wil nocht turn agn entent, for all this world breid,
 Or I pair of pris was penny-worth in this place,
 For basendie or barrell;
 I knaw my awne quarrell,
 I dreid not the pereill
 To dee in this case!" (11.1073-89.)

What then, asks Gawain, can he do to save him:-

"That sall I tel the with tong, trewly in tale,
 Wold thou denye the in deid to do my deuis;
 Lat it worth at my wil the wourship to wale,
 As I had wonnyn the of ware, wourthy and wis;
 Syne cary to the castel, quhare I haue maist cure.
 Thus may thou saif me fra syte;
 As I am cristynit perfite,
 I call thi kyndnes quyte,
 And sauf thyn honoure!" (11.1094-1102.)

If effect, Golagrus demands from his conqueror the same sacrifice as the Riche Soudanier, but for the sake of his honour not his love. The decision to surrender his victory is more difficult for the Gawain of the English version since he has not had the warrant, given to his French counterpart in the hunting incident, of the violence of the passion which motivates his opponent in making this demand upon him. Knowing little of the lord of the castle, except by report, he is required to trust him with his own reputation, since, if Golagrus fails to keep faith with him by ultimately making submission to Arthur, Gawain's honour will be injured in the eyes of his Round Table comrades:-

"That war hard," said that hoynd, "as haue I gude hale!
 Ane wonder peralous poynt, partenyng grete plight,
 To coner in thi gentrice, but signete or sale,
 And I before saw the neuer, sickerly, with sight;
 To laif in thi laute, and thou war valeis,
 Than had I cassin in esir mony kene knight.
 (11.1103-8.)

His decision, however, is the same as in the original: the duel is briefly resumed, Gawain pretends to be overcome and accompanies Golagrus back to the castle in apparent defeat.

The outcome, then, like the dilemma with which Gawain is faced, is identical in both versions. Only the motivation of his decision has been changed. But the change is emphatically pointed by the frequency with which the concept of honour is referred to by both Golagrus and Gawain. There can be no doubt that the alteration has been deliberately contrived by the redactor. Though the full extent of his reinterpretation only becomes apparent here, he has long been preparing for this scene by numerous changes which only become fully effective at this point. It is clear, for example, that the frequent interpolations illustrating the nobility of Golagrus or directly praising his knightly qualities have borne weight with Gawain and are responsible for his unwillingness to push his adversary to extremity:-

Sohir Gawayne tretit the knight to turn his entent,
For he wes wondir we to wikk hym mare wugh. (11.1066-7.)

Sohir Gawayne rewit the renk, that wes riale,
And said to the reuerend, riche and rightwis:
"How may I succour the sound, semely in sale,
Before this pepill in plene, and pair nocht thy pris?"
(11.1090-3.)

And the importance which the redactor attached to this conflict of personalities and ideals is indicated by the thoroughness with which it has been worked out. The great extent of the episode is due, in some degree, to the formality of the exchanges between the two knights, - the speeches, here as elsewhere, being complicated by alliterative elaboration, - yet the essential argument has not been spun out artificially. On the contrary, the dilemma is more directly and realistically stated than in the original, where it is accepted as a convention of the plot without any show of interest in its implications, and it is more genuinely argued, Gawain striving by every means to save his opponent's life and honour. As a result the whole scene is much more forceful than in the French version where the hero's decision is taken too lightly and too quickly to carry

sacrificion on the human plane. Comparing the two versions one is left with the impression that what to the French author was only one of many similar crises in the complex plot of his romance, has become for the English redactor a genuine human situation, to be treated with a sincerity which will engage the sympathetic interest of the reader.

The care with which the emotional context of the scene has been filled out reflects this change in interpretation, and, incidentally, accounts, to some extent, for the greater bulk of the alliterative version. The agony of the watchers on the castle walls when they see their lord unhorsed reminds the reader that much more than a single life hangs upon Gawain's decision:-

Lordingis and ladyis in the castell on loft,
 When thai saw thair liege lord laid on the lanthis,
 Long swait thing of sware swownit full oft,
 Wyis wourthit for wo to wringin thair handis.
 Nes nowthir solace nor sang thair sorow to soft,
 And hair stonay and stour at thair hartis standis.
 On Criste cumly thay cry: "On croce as thou coft,
 With thi blissit blude to bring us out of bandis,
 Let neuer our souerane his cause with schame to ancheif!
 Mary, fairest of face,
 Beseik thi sone in this cace,
 And drop of his grete grace
 He grant us to geif!" (11.1051-63.)

This addition is directly instrumental to the redactor's purpose since it is the attachment of his people, demonstrated here, which, as the following scene will show, justifies Golagrus in imposing such a decision upon Gawain. And, similarly, the reaction of Arthur, who sees the failure of his ambition to subdue the castle as his champion is led away in apparent defeat, underlines the magnitude of the sacrifice implied by that decision:-

The roy rased ful raith, that reuth was to se,
 And raikit full redles to his riche tent;
 The watter wet his chekis, that schalkis myght se,
 As all his welthis in world had bene away went,
 And othir bornys for barnet blakynnit thair ble.
 Braithly bundin in baill, thair breistis war blent.
 "The flour of knighthede is caught throu his cruelte!

Now is the Round Tabill rebuttit, richest of rent,
 When ourschipfull Wawane, the wit of our were,
 Is led to ane presounce;
 Now failyeis gude fortune!" (11.1129-39.)

(1142-1162 : 118a - 118d.) The adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux draws to its conclusion, following similar lines in both versions, though earlier alterations by the English redactor necessitate some changes here also. The French text is brief and factual. Entering the castle with the Riche Soudoier Gawain makes his pretended submission to the lady-

Et messire Gawain de ceste heure à la damoiselle se
 rend en disant: "Dame, non espee tenez, car pour tout
 vray vous certifie que par ses armes m'a conquis le
 bon chevallier vostre amy!" (fol.118b.)

She suspects nothing, but as soon as possible the Riche Soudoier persuades her to withdraw to another of his castles where he will shortly join her to enjoy their privacy together:-

Et fault entendre que le souldoyer luy feist aller
 pour escaincte qu'elle n'entendist parler comme il
 avoit esté battu. Mais si tost que de la damoiselle
 il se fust delivré, fust par tout le chastel seen
 comme il estoit advenu. (fol.118b.)

Having confessed his defeat to his followers and released Sirlet and Lucan, the Riche Soudoier rides with Gawain to the royal camp, where he recounts everything to Arthur and makes his submission together with all his knights. Both sides feast together in the Chastel Orgueilleux, where Arthur spends fifteen days before setting out upon his homeward journey.

Here, again, the most significant changes made by the redactor affect, not the events themselves so much as the motivation which underlies what is said and done. There can, of course, be no question in the alliterative poem of disguising the real outcome of the duel from the non-existent heroine. But, as before, it is concern for his honour which leads Golagrus to conceal his defeat from his followers until he has tested their reaction by putting the issue to them in a hypothetical

Foras:- "Say me ans chein, the tane of thir twa,
 Quethir ye like me lord, laught in the feild,
 Or ellis my life at the lest lelely forga,
 And boune yow to sum berne, that myght be your beild?"
 The wourday wyis at that word nor woundir wa,
 Than thair wist thair seuerane wes schent vnder scheild.
 "We wil na fauour here fenge to frende nor to fa;
 We like yow ay as our lord to were and to weild;
 Your lordship we may nocht forga, also lang as we leif;
 Ye sal be our gouernour,
 Quhil your dais may endure,
 In eise and honour,
 For chance that may cheif" (11.1181-93.)

Assured of their continuing loyalty he reveals the true state of affairs
 and praises the magnanimity of Gawain:-

"In sight of his seuerane, this did the gentill:
 He has me sauit fra syte throw his gentrice;
 It war syn, but recure,
 The knightis honour suld enure,
 That did me this honoure,
 Quhilk maist is of price. (11.1201-6.)

So, within the terms of his own interpretation of the episode, the redactor
 has brought his version to the same practical conclusion as the French
 original. But, unlike the French author, he is not content to round off
 the plot without resolving the idealistic issues involved. He has in-
 serted, without warrant from his source, a long speech in which Colagrus
 makes his apologetic, arguing that what Fortune decrees no man can escape.
 He cites the example of famous men who have been overthrown by Fate,
 -Sampson, Solomon, and the six of the Nine Worthies who belonged to the
 ancient world. At first sight the speech seems superfluous, -a conven-
 tional acknowledgement of the power of Fortune, which is a recurrent theme
 in late Medieval literature. But on reflection its function becomes
 apparent. The Riche Soudoier needs no apology for the demand which
 he makes upon Gawain, -love is a sufficient excuse in itself, and Gawain's
 sacrifice is made partly in fulfillment of his knightly duty towards
 the lady whose life he indirectly saves. Deprived of this excuse, Sir

Colagrus feels called upon to justify his conduct:-

"Sen fortune cackis the cours, throu hir guentye,
 I did it nocht for mane dreid that I had to de,
 Na for na faulting of hart, na for na fantise;
 Quhare Criste cackis the cours, it rymsis quently;
 May nowthir power nor pith put him to prise.
 Quhan on-fortune quhelays the quheil, thair gais grace by;
 Quha may his danger endure or destange dispise,
 That led men in langour ay lostand inly,
 The dote na langar may endure na Brightin dewinis.
 Ilk man may kyth be his cure,
 Baith knyght, king and empriour,
 And muse in his myrrour,
 And wator waist mine is. (11.1220-32.)

By presenting his story as an example of what all men may discover in their own experience he sums up the moral of the whole. His apology is not entirely adequate in human terms, nor is the moral altogether relevant, but it is significant that the English redactor, having stressed the nobility and unbending resolution of Sir Colagrus, should find it necessary to supply a substitute for the more natural, but, from his point of view, inadmissible, motivation of the original version. His interest clearly was not confined to action alone, but comprehended the motives from which the action springs.

Other elements in this final scene which seem, at first sight, to be superfluous additions on the part of the redactor, are similarly related to the underlying plan of the redaction. When the lord of the castle appears before Arthur to make his submission there is an elaborate and formal exchange of speeches. This, like the description of the procession in which Gawain leads his defeated opponent to the royal camp and of the feasting in which both parties join, is greatly expanded from a comparatively brief passage in the prose romance. The added emphasis of the alliterative version is necessary both in relation to form and to content. What in the French work is merely the conclusion of one amongst many episodes has been made the final scene of the English poem,

and if the story is not to end in anticlimax it must be rounded off with appropriate emphasis, so that what is merely outlined in the original is fully described and acted out in the exchanges between Arthur and Melagrus. The theme of Gawain's moral victory on behalf of the Round Table is conclusively demonstrated by the fullness with which the lord of the castle makes his submission to Arthur and the frankness with which he acknowledges the part played by Gawain:-

"Because of yone bald berne, that broght me of handis,
 All that I haue undir hewyne, I hald of you haill,
 In firth, forest and fell, quhare euer that it standis.
 Sen vourschippfull Wewane has wonnyn to your handis
 The senyory in gouernynge,
 Cumly conquerour and kyng,
 Heir mak I yow obeising,
 As liege lord of landis. (11.1316-23.)

The importance which the alliterative poet attached to Gawain's victory over an opponent worthy of him in every respect, - a theme which is largely his own creation, - is suggested yet once more in a final alteration to the original version. The Riche Boudoier, having made his submission, is absorbed by the court and rides with it towards the next adventure, but in the closing lines of the English poem Arthur recognises the respect due to a noble adversary by freeing Melagrus from his allegiance and restoring him to proud independence:-

"Heir mak I the reward, as I haue rescoun,
 Before thir senyocouris in sight, samely beside,
 As twisshing the temporalite, in toure and in toun,
 In firth, forest and fell, and woddie so wide;
 I mak releinsching of thin allegiaunce;
 But freid I call the warand,
 Baith be sey and be land,
 Fre as I the first fand.
 With outin distaunce? (11.1354-62.)

In its context this passage has a tone of finality which, even without the warrant of the sixteenth century printers' colophon, - "Heir endis the Knightly Tale of Melagres and Gawane" -, would suggest

that the plan of the alliterative poem was complete at this point. The Book of the Chastel Orgueilleux continues, following the return journey of the royal party, which involves a second visit to the castle of Brande Lis, where they learn that Gawain's small son has been abducted and set out to search for him,--but this is extraneous matter, preparing for Gawain's Visit to the Grail Castle, the next adventure in the uninterrupted sequence of the French romance. Had the English author intended to continue his redaction beyond this point it would probably have been necessary for him to have included the earlier scene in the castle of Lis, explaining the existence of Gawain's son, and to allow Golagrus to accompany the searchers as the Riche Coudoier does in the original version. The absence of these linking episodes suggests that the redactor was interested only in certain passages of the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleux. From it he has selected two incidents,--the encounter with the dwarf in the castle of Yder le Bel and the siege of Chastel Orgueilleux,--which show Gawain as a perfect knight practising the chief chivalric virtues, courtesy, courage, military prowess and magnanimity towards a defeated adversary. If, as this combination of incidents suggests, it was his intention to make a poem in praise of Gawain it is remarkable that he did not choose more widely amongst the numerous Gawain adventures of the Perceval Continuations, and, in particular, that he ignored those episodes which associate his hero with the Grail quest. The limited nature of his redaction may be explained in two ways: either his source was similarly limited in coverage, or his conception of a romance differed fundamentally from that of those who compiled the Romance de Perceval. The fact that Golagrus and Gawain combines two incidents which are similarly associated only in the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleux is presumptive evidence that the latter was the source in question. In effect,

the narrative sequence of the English poem is that of the Book of the Chastel Orquelles, with the omission of those episodes which link it with the other books of the First Continuation. These linking episodes suggest, and the surviving manuscripts demonstrate, the improbability of the alliterative poet having found his two adventures in isolation from the others with which they are interwoven. Whether or not one accepts Ketrick's identification of the 1530 Prose Print as most closely representing the original source of the English poem, there is every reason to presume that the redactor had before him a version of the Roman de Perceval which extended at least as far as the end of the First Continuation, even if it did not contain the later episodes.

Whatever the precise nature of his source it is obvious from what the redactor has made of it that his conception of a romance differed fundamentally from that of the French authors who carried on the work of Chrétien de Troyes. The central theme of Chrétien's poem, -the Grail quest-, was progressively ignored in favour of purely secular adventures by those who continued the Roman de Perceval, just as the original hero was largely replaced by Gawain, and the loosely constructed romance degenerated into a formless sequence of incidents, often quite fortuitously connected, new adventures arising during the pursuit of others, in a complicated interweaving of narratives. Many of these incidents demonstrate, -though in a somewhat remote and mechanical way, - various aspects of the codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love, but their haphazard association in the romance suggests that they owe their inclusion not to any specific relevance to the general theme, but purely to their individual entertainment value. The selection of two amongst so many similar incidents indicates at least some degree of discrimination on the part of the redactor. His conception of a romance apparently

implied selection and concentration; the narration of two related episodes, placed within the Arthurian context, but centered upon a particular member of the royal court whose knightly character forms the unifying theme of the work.

This difference in conception inevitably required the redactor to make some structural alterations in his source material, primarily in separating it from its context in the Perceval continuation. The basic structure of Arthurian romance made this comparatively easy. The romances are commonly presented as records of knight errantry, journeys of the royal court, or, more frequently, of individual knights, which lead inevitably to a series of adventures. The journey itself is the narrative thread on which the various incidents are strung and it can be broken at almost any point without difficulty. This the alliterative poet has done, neatly and effectively, both at the beginning and the end of the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleus, cutting his chosen adventures free from earlier and later episodes, and again within the book in excising the scene at the castle of Bran de Lis. The latter is a particularly fortunate example of the convenience of such a narrative sequence from the redactor's point of view: by continuing the royal journey uninterrupted from the house of Yder le Bel to the Chastel Orgueilleus (vide supra, p. 335) the English author has dropped without trace a whole episode which he apparently considered superfluous to his design. The fact that he later recalled and made use of a detail from the excised passage (vide supra, p. 336-7), and that he was forced to supply a substitute to fill the role of Bran de Lis as commentator before the Chastel Orgueilleus (vide supra, p. 337-8), though it throws light on the original from which he worked, does not weaken his structural

design: the English reader, ignorant of the original, would accept the alliterative version at its face value without detecting any discrepancy. And, similarly, the ease with which the redactor has dispensed with the presence of Bran de Lis at the siege of the Chastel Orgueilleus indicates the purely fortuitous nature of the links by which the original author attempted to give some semblance of unity to his episodic narrative. The fact that the Riche Boudoier, accompanying Arthur on his return journey, is drawn into the next sequence of adventures, forms a similar link,--one which is easily severed by the redactor, who leaves Colageus in enjoyment of his liberty (vide supra, pp. 380), and allows us to assume that the return to court was uneventful. Only the backward link, which associates this episode with earlier incidents in the Perceval complex, presented the redactor with any real difficulty. Even if we may assume that his copy of the original was sufficiently complete to allow him to understand the references to Girflet's imprisonment (vide supra, p. 315), the tenuous link which they provide with events so much earlier in the story could only be an embarrassment to him. To have summarised the action leading up to Girflet's capture, or to have translated the elaborate introduction stressing the significance which the mission of retribution holds for Arthur (vide supra, pp. 319-21), would have been a clumsy solution, unbalancing a narrative centered upon the means by which that mission is accomplished to the virtual exclusion of its original purpose. The revival of the Girflet motif is, in any case, a rather specious link with the Perceval proper, and Arthur's concern after such a lengthy interval is overlaboured and unconvincing. The redactor probably sensed that the linking passage was strained and, since his limited design made the allusion to Chrétien's poem of no value, he preferred to ignore it altogether and contrive a new opening for his

version. The conventional device which he has substituted,—the pilgrimage which leads Arthur and his followers to adventure (vide supra, pp. 320-24)—, fulfils its function with economy, avoiding any association with earlier incidents and the necessity for explanation. But it has this defect, that unlike a secular mission it cannot be suspended or forgotten when the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux arises en route. The rapidity with which the redactor has disposed of the pilgrimage (vide supra, p. 341) shows that its function in his narrative was a purely practical one. And, by contrast, his realisation that this substitute for the Girflet motif required him to supply an alternative reason for Arthur's attack upon the castle of Gelagrus is evident in the thoroughness with which he has replaced the elaborate introduction to the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleux.

The nature of the substitution is of the greatest importance, indicating a change of emphasis which is apparent throughout the redaction, and affects the subject-matter fundamentally. By making Arthur's intolerance of a knight whose only crime is his independence, his refusal to owe allegiance to anyone (vide supra, p. 338-9), the mainspring of the action, the alliterative poet has altered the moral basis of the story. And, although the traditional character of Arthur would probably have allowed the Medieval audience to accept his unprovoked aggression without question, the emphasis which the redactor has placed upon it suggests that this is not a haphazard substitute for the original motivation but a deliberate change in interpretation. By concentrating attention not upon Arthur but upon his adversary, in describing the elaborate preparations for resistance (vide supra, pp. 342-5) the English author has emphasised the magnitude of the task undertaken by the

king, whose admiration at the strength of the forces marshalled against him renews his determination to crush such a worthy opponent (vide supra, p. 345), making it clear that he is deliberately and consciously staking the reputation of the Round Table. That this is humanly more impressive and morally less justifiable than the rescue of Sir Iseult would not have troubled readers of the alliterative poem. But by this substitution the English poet has based the whole incident on a motif which gives it fundamental human appeal: the conflict of two personalities equally proud, independent and unyielding, one of whom must, it seems, be humbled into submission. This idea is, to some extent, implicit in the original, but by a change in emphasis, fully and carefully effected, the redactor has made it the specific theme of his version, one which involves a new interpretation of the plot and an altered characterization of the protagonists.

The action of the English poem springs from the imperious character of Arthur, but, in the tradition of romance,--as distinct from that of the pseudo-chronicles,--the king is not an active protagonist, and the solution of the dilemma posed by his opposition to the lord of the castle is left to Gawain, who acts as the representative of the Round Table. The plot turns, therefore, upon the traditional character of Gawain, and this fact has inevitably influenced the form and content of the poem. By leafing through the Perceval complex the alliterative poet could easily have collected material for a Gawain romance in which his hero embodied each of the chivalric virtues in turn. But it is evident from the construction of the redaction that his interest was excited specifically by the adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux. In association with it he found two other episodes: the scene in the castle of Bran de Lis, which,--since it is incomplete, involved, and little to his hero's

credit, he entirely omitted (vide supra, pp. 332-5), and the incident of the dwarf in the house of Yder le Bel (vide supra, pp. 323-32), which, though it is equally dispensable, he chose to retain. This selection of episodes was clearly deliberate and the latter was retained with a specific end in view: by contrasting the boorishness of Kay with Gawain's courtesy and consideration for others it prepares, to some extent, for his treatment of Colagrus at the climax of the main action. But it is equally evident from the attention given to it that the redactor valued it for its preparatory function only and considered it ancillary to the incident in which his real interest lay. The general introduction and the affair of the dwarf occupy the first 17 stanzas of the alliterative poem while the remaining 63 are given to the siege of Chastel Orgueilleus. To the modern mind the association of two episodes so disproportionate in treatment may seem clumsy, despite their thematic relationship, but it is doubtful if the medieval reader would have been troubled by the unbalanced nature of the compilation. Whether or not it can be regarded as totally successful, the form of the alliterative work is clearly the result of a unified conception, designed to convert the disparate elements of a cyclic romance into a related whole, centered upon one major incident to which everything else is subordinated, and devoted to the illustration of a single theme. Such a conception contrasts strongly with the original context of the source material in the loosely-formed, themeless compendium of the Forcival complex, and suggests a redactor of independent mind, to whom a romance implied more than a formless sequence of incidents, treated as of equal worth and retailed for their individual interest alone.

Yet, though the English author worked with unusual originality and thoroughness in separating his story-matter from its context

and shaping it to the requirements of a self-contained romance, his redaction would have been of limited interest only had he confined his treatment to matters of form and outline alone. The chief importance of Colleges and Gawayn as a Middle English romance based upon a French source lies in the fact that the theme of the original has been fundamentally altered and the whole reinterpreted in a way which contrasts strongly with the evident intention of the French author. The adventure of the Chastel Orgueilleux poses a problem relating to the governing codes of Medieval society, to which Gawayn, as the perfect type of contemporary manhood, supplies the solution. The problem, as originally stated, might be summarized in this way: how may a knight save the life of a vanquished opponent, who must either die or offend against the code of Courtly Love, without himself violating the laws of Chivalry? As restated by the alliterative poet it has become: how may a knight spare the life and honour of an unyielding opponent without losing his own honour in the process? Even in this simplified form the contrast between the two themes is obvious. The English poet's reinterpretation, given effect in all its ramifications, is responsible for sweeping changes in construction, characterization, and even in the atmosphere of the work.

The most evident changes in construction are those which involve the omission of sections of the original concerning the love of the Riche Soudeior and his gais, an element which either offended or failed to interest the English redactor. By omitting the lengthy interlude of the hunt he has left the English reader in ignorance of the claim which love exercises upon one of the chief protagonists (vide summary, 361-5), a claim which, in the original version, influences the hero Gawayn, in making the decision upon which the action turns. Consequently,

his decision is reached in a scene which omits all mention of the lady (vide supra, pp. 371-7), and the dilemma facing him is posed not in terms of love but of honour. The practical outcome remains unaltered: Gawain hazards his own reputation to save his opponent from the choice between dishonour and death, and is justified by the other's subsequent behaviour. It might be argued that, as the hunting scene is a self-contained incident this reinterpretation was forced upon the redactor by its absence from the version of the original available to him. But this would assume that other references to the love motif, integrated in the plot, were also lacking: the redactor has made no use of the scene in which Gawain surrenders his sword to the lady (vide supra, pp. 377-8), or of the Irish knight's account of the means by which she ensures that her lover shall take the field on the fatal day (vide supra, pp. 363-4). Even if his sources had lacked all these passages it would not have been difficult for the English poet to reconstruct the love element from the Riche Seudoier's account to Gawain in refusing to surrender after his defeat (vide supra, p. 372),—an account which the earlier scenes illustrate dramatically without adding anything of essential importance. To presume the absence of this key passage also would postulate a form of the original so fragmentary as to be of little use to any redactor. And there are some minor features of the alliterative version which suggest a knowledge on the redactor's part of scenes which he can, therefore, be assumed to have omitted deliberately: he has confused the horn which sounds to battle with the bell which introduces the hunting scene in his original (vide supra, pp. 365-6), and when the horn heralds the appearance of the first champion from the castle (not, it is true, Golagrus himself), Sir Spynagros explains to Arthur:—

He thinkis prove to preve, for his paramour,
And prik in your presence, to purchase his pray. (ll. 538-9.)

The reference may have been dictated by the needs of ~~the~~ ^{the} poet, or the poet may have recalled incidentally the love motif of the French version. But, these details apart, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the process of redaction involved the deliberate suppression of the love element, requiring some structural alterations and the ~~creation of~~ ^{removal of} lengthy passages in the original text.

These changes are essentially negative. Had the process of redaction gone no further than this we should have been forced to conclude that the English author approached his source in a purely negative spirit, removing the elements which he found uncongenial and replacing them only where they were essential to the plot. In effect, his additions to the original version far exceed his omissions, revealing a positive and highly individual approach to his source. And, significantly, the most extensive additions relate to his reinterpretation of the main theme. The original author did not find it necessary to explain Gawain's motive in allowing his opponent to escape the choice between love and death since it is implicit in the situation: the Riche Seudoier is bound by the laws of love and Gawain's sacrifice is made in recognition of the superior claim of a code which needed no explanation to the contemporary reader. But the alliterative poet, having rejected the code of love, did not merely replace it with the code of chivalry, which implies that knights shall mutually respect each other's honour. His hero responds not to a chivalric dilemma but to a human situation, and makes his sacrifice on his personal estimate of his opponent's honour and integrity. Here, therefore, as in the general framework of the alliterative romance, the fundamental issue is one not of convention but of character: it arises from a clash of temperaments between Arthur and Golagrus and is resolved in a conflict of personalities,

when the integrity of Golagrus is matched with Gawain's magnanimity. The neat psychological pattern of the romance is somewhat marred by the fact that Arthur's behaviour in forcing his suzerainty upon a free knight is not justifiable on human or moral grounds, but it has this advantage, that it frees the two active protagonists from any moral responsibility for the situation in which they find themselves: Golagrus defends himself from unprovoked aggression while Gawain obeys without question the orders of his feudal superior. By accepting the traditional Arthur as the un-motivated deus ex machina who precipitates the action, the redactor achieved a plot without a villain which enabled him to concentrate upon the interaction of two personalities of equal integrity and worth.

The success of the redaction therefore depends upon the characterization of the protagonists to a much greater extent than the conventional Medieval romance. So far as Gawain is concerned the English author has followed the lead given by his sources, using the incident in the house of Yder le Bel to remind the reader of his hero's traditional reputation as the pattern of chivalry by contrasting him with the inept and boorish Kay. Thereafter he relies largely on this traditional character, only occasionally inserting a brief passage in praise of Gawain's qualities at crucial points in the story: when, as Arthur's ambassador, he first meets Golagrus (vide supra, p. 348), and again when he is led from the battlefield in apparent defeat (vide supra, pp. 376-7). These passages are brief and seem strangely limited when one considers that the English romance is devoted specifically to the glorification of Gawain. But the redactor was sufficiently sensitive to his material to realize that the incident of the Chastel Orgueilleux demanded a more

subtle characterisation of the hero than that to be achieved by such conventional methods. Significantly, he rejected the opportunity to repeat the effect of a flattering contrast, which his original offered him in Kay's disgrace on the battlefield (vide supra, p. 355), in favour of something much more profound and original: by converting Kay's defeat into victory and visiting it immediately before the scene of Gawain's apparent overthrow (vide supra, pp. 368-70) he has heightened the circumstances in which the hero accepts humiliation before his king and companions and underlined the moral qualities involved in making such a decision. And, significantly too, he has put the most direct and cogent praise of his hero into the mouth of the enemy, Colagrus, who, acknowledges Gawain's worth before his own followers (vide supra, p. 378) and before the court of Arthur (vide supra, p. 380). These passages, also, are brief, but they gain added force from the fact that the praises they contain are voiced by an opponent who is in every respect worthy of Gawain, his equal in chivalric virtues as well as in physical prowess. The theme of Gawain's double victory, military and moral, over a knight of equal worth is inherent in the original story, but the redactor has heightened and stressed it not only by altering both construction and motivation but, most effectively, by elaborating the character of Colagrus far beyond anything which the French author thought necessary in presenting the Riche Soudoier.

But, characteristically, he has achieved his purpose largely by extended use of a device put at his disposal by the author of the original version. Bran de Lis, whose function in the original is confined to explaining the usages of the Chastel Orgueilleux, becomes, in the person of Sir Ssynagros, an ardent partisan of Colagrus, interpreting his motives,

expounding his character, and directly praising him before his own companions of the Round Table. It is Spynagros who explains why Golagrus owes allegiance to no overlord (vide supra, p. 338), and warns Arthur not to interfere lightly with one whose spirit of independence will drive him to resist any attempt to subjugate him (vide supra, pp. 334-6). This spirit is given practical expression in the preparations of the castle defenders to resist a siege (vide supra, pp. 342-5), described in detail at much greater length than in the French text, and with a forcefulness which compels Arthur's admiration (vide supra, p. 345). And it is Spynagros again who seizes this opportunity to stress the resolution of Golagrus and his followers (vide supra, p. 346). Though this episode may have been suggested by a brief passage in the French text its treatment there is purely descriptive and its implications are not brought out by anything comparable to the comments of Arthur and Spynagros. The lengthy sequence which follows, upon the embassy sent to demand the submission of Golagrus (vide supra, pp. 347-51), owes nothing whatsoever to the original and was clearly invented by the redactor in order that Gawain, who leads the mission, may be witness to another aspect of his opponent's character, - the courtesy and nobility which underlie his resolute independence. Here, again, Spynagros has been used to outline the salient traits of personality, warning Gawain and his two companions that they must behave discreetly before a knight of such repute (vide supra, p. 347). These qualities are then demonstrated by the manner in which Golagrus, firmly yet graciously, rejects Arthur's demand (vide supra, pp. 348-9). And when his personal prowess is at its height because of moment in the story, as he is about to meet Gawain in the field, the same formula is employed: Spynagros praises his courage and military skill at great

length, urging Gawain not to risk an encounter with him (vide supra, p. 366). In addition, the redactor has made use of the common convention by which the prowess of the knight is reflected in the splendour of his equipment and armour, replacing the original description of the arming of Gawain by a similar passage concerned with Golagrus (vide supra, pp. 367-8). And finally, Golagrus is characterized by his behaviour in the crisis of the action, by his stout resistance against Gawain (vide supra, pp. 370-1), by his calm refusal to dishonour his ancestors and himself by surrendering (vide supra, pp. 373-4), and by the frankness with which he acknowledges his opponent's generous treatment (vide supra, pp. 377-9). The total effect is cumulative and Sir Golagrus emerges as a character much more fully realised than his counterpart in the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleus. The Riche Seuloier is fully characterised only in regard to his love for the lady, and, though it is assumed that he also possesses all the chivalric virtues, he remains a vague figure, indistinguishable from scores of other knights of romance. By contrast, the personality of Golagrus dominates the English romance almost to the neglect of Gawain, the conventional hero. Indeed, it might be said that there are two heroes since the interest of the story lies, not in the conventional contrast of good and evil but in the conflict of two noble natures, where the greatest honour belongs, not to the boldest warrior, but to the knight whose practice of the chivalric code, and the self-sacrifice which it exacts, is most perfect. The outcome must inevitably reflect upon the character of the loser, more especially if, as in the English redaction, his behaviour is dictated by purely personal considerations and not, as in the French text, by a conflict of duties. The redactor was apparently aware of this flaw in his interpretation and inserted the strange passage in which

Golagrus makes his apologia (vide supra, pp. 378-9). It is not altogether a satisfactory conclusion to the psychological plan of the redaction, but it indicates the poet's unwillingness to abandon a character who had so excited his interest and to whom he had devoted so much attention, as soon as his practical function in the plot was completed.

This passage is entirely original, and though others dealing with the personality of Golagrus may have been elaborated from ideas in the French version, the element is largely additional and has fundamentally affected the economy of the redaction. As a result of these and other additions it is difficult to define the conduct of the redaction in relation to the source. Where the two narratives are sufficiently close to permit direct comparison, the English text appears more direct and simple, following the general outline of the French original while ignoring the many details of human interest which lend it reality. The opening sequence, for example, gives a much abbreviated account of the incident in the house of Yder le Bel, omitting Kay's preliminary inquiries (vide supra, pp. 323-4), his altercation with the dwarf (vide supra, pp. 324-5), the blow with the spit (vide supra, p. 327), Gawain's humorous revelation of Kay's deceit (vide supra, p. 328), and Arthur's jesting reference to the dogs which devour the peacock (vide supra, p. 330). As the alliterative poet clearly intended to subordinate this episode to the story proper such abbreviation was essential, but the siege of Chastel Orgueilleux has been treated in similar fashion, the redactor concentrating on the essential action to the neglect of incidental details. Consequently, the two narratives are very different in effect and emphasis. The French prose unfolds smoothly and coherently, devoting equal attention to each incident in the story, unhampered by description or characterisation at

any length, but enlivened by many touches of detail which stimulate the imagination. The alliterative poem, by contrast, is laid out on broad, sweeping lines, presenting the story as a sequence of episodes, in each of which the essential action is rapidly outlined in a context which, though it assists the effect of the narrative, does little to advance it. The one is competent and urbane, if somewhat facile and shallow, the other is erratic in movement, yet powerful and compelling in effect.

One reason at least for this contrast in styles of narration lies in the redactor's choice of an alliterative medium. The prose of the 1530 Print lends itself, even more than the flowing couplets of the original Perceval, to a continuous narrative, developing point by point, mingling action and incidental detail, without interruption of any kind. The alliterative line, especially when combined with the elaborate rhyme-scheme of the Colagrus and Gawain stanza, -a, b, a, b, a, b, a, b, c, d, d, d, c-, is too inflexible to deal effectively with a diffuse narrative. Its epigrammatic construction, usually in half-line units, is better suited to expressing ideas or moods than to showing how they are related in a particular situation. But to a master of alliterative verse this was not an absolute defect, and this particular poet has adapted his story-telling to circumvent the limitations of the medium, by reducing the direct narration of events to the minimum, and exploit its capabilities fully in support of his abbreviated narrative. The chief stylistic feature of alliterative verse is its ability, by accumulating points of detail, more closely related thematically than syntactically, to describe scenes, convey atmosphere, and express attitudes and states of mind. The author of Colagrus and Gawain has made extensive use of it for all these

purposes, and it is this extra-narrative element which is responsible for the radical difference between the redaction and its original in scale and proportion. Some of the descriptive passages,—the feast in the house of Yder le Bel (vide supra, p. 331), the rich tents of Arthur's camp (vide supra, p. 342), and the feasting which concludes the poem (vide supra, p. 379)—, are purely incidental. Others have some bearing upon the action: the richness of the hall in which Kay encounters the dwarf (vide supra, pp. 327-8) suggests the rank and worth of the host against whom he offends, and the description of the uneasy castle (vide supra, p. 337) indicates its impregnability. Both types of passage usually derive from something in the French original but the alliterative poet always exceeds the warrant of his source, adding detail to detail, in elaborate descriptions which contrast strangely with the abbreviated narrative in which they are set. This is true also of the set speeches and formal conversations in which he allows his characters to express their intentions and reactions. These are, however, much more closely related to the theme of the romance: the contrast between the contempt with which the dwarf's master comments upon Kay's misbehaviour and his complimentary exchanges with Gawain (vide supra, pp. 330-31), establishes the reputation of one protagonist, while the formal courtesy with which Dolores responds to Arthur's embassy (vide supra, pp. 348-9) does the same for the other, and the contest of chivalric personalities, which is the chief interest of the redaction, is expressed in the verbal duel between them at the crisis of the action (vide supra, pp. 373-4). These speeches and dialogues are even less to the original than do the descriptive passages. The French text provides opportunities for their introduction, but the redactor has extended these by converting direct narration into dialogue,

exploiting the element to a degree which far exceeds its practical function in the story. His enthusiasm has produced some of the most effective passages in the poem, reflecting in their rather stilted eloquence something of the formal courtesy of relationships between the characters. Together with the battle passages they are mainly responsible for much of the distinctive atmosphere which characterises the alliterative work. The redactor's attention is divided between two aspects of warfare: the military preparations which precede it, and the hand-to-hand fighting which it involves. Both are necessarily included in the original version, but their treatment there is extremely limited by comparison with the English redaction, of which some 40 stanzas, in a total of 105, are concerned with one or the other. The preliminaries to combat,--preparations within the enemy castle (vide supra, pp. 342-5), the arming of Sir Ransard (vide supra, pp. 358-9), and of Sir Golagrus (vide supra, p. 368)--, bear little resemblance to those in the original, as the alliterative poet has concentrated on practical matters which suggest the stern reality of warfare, and on the splendour of equipment which reflects the ability of the wearer, to the neglect of ceremonial with which the French author was chiefly concerned. His account of the battle itself (vide supra, pp. 351-61 and pp. 365-71) differs so widely in both scope and interpretation as to bear almost no relation to the source. The original author conceived the engagement before the Chastel Orgueilleus as a series of formal jousts between individual knights, fought within the lists and under the laws of tournament, and ending, without injury, in a technical victory for one party or the other. In the alliterative poem the contest opens with such a duel, but it is described in terms which suggest the reality of a judicial combat rather

than the make-believe of the tourney. As the action proceeds, with larger forces engaged on each successive day, even this degree of similarity vanishes until there is little to distinguish the violent struggle, resulting in bloodshed and death, from open warfare. Neither the number or order of the combats, nor the numbers or names of those engaged, nor the nature of the fighting, nor the outcome of individual engagements, can be said to bear any real resemblance to the French original.

The degree and extent of this divergence from the source has led one scholar, Neilson, to suggest that the battle-sequence is not borrowed romance matter but a factual account of certain events during the reign of Edward III. He does not deny that the general outline of the alliterative poem is taken from the Perceval continuation, but he believes that "a section of the plot of that romance utilised in the poem is, nevertheless, so skilfully adapted to the historical situation as to make difficult the task of determining where exactly romance shaded into narrative of allegorical or actual fact".⁽¹⁾ He equates Arthur's pilgrimage with the expedition of Edward III against King John of France in 1355, the siege of the castle with the Black Prince's attack on Carcassonne, and the duel of Golaerus and Gawain with a personal encounter between King John and the Black Prince at Poitiers in 1356. The specific parallels between history and romance are, however, vague and unconvincing: similar correspondences between fact and fiction could probably be deduced from almost every Medieval romance. In this instance

1) See, G. Neilson, "History in the Romance of Golaerus and Gawain", Proceedings of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, Vol. XXXIII, Glasgow, 1902, pp. 234-49.

2) *Ibid.*, p. 238.

the identification accounts for features of the English story which are more reasonably explained by their presence in the French original, while doing nothing to account for the specific differences between the battle scenes in the two versions. It seems improbable that a redactor who showed such a marked interest in the moral and idealistic content of his original should choose to make it a vehicle for historical material, still more difficult to understand why an incident in English history should appeal to a Scottish poet writing a hundred years after the event. When the battle-scene is viewed in the context of the whole a more reasonable explanation of this divergence from the source suggests itself. The redaction as a whole is characterized by a much greater degree of realism than the French version, suggesting that the alliterative author was more intensely involved and associated himself more intimately with the human situation presented by his story-matter. His reinterpretation of the original motivation and the stress which he has placed upon character show that he viewed the incident, not as a conventional demonstration of contemporary codes, but as a study of the practical operation of those codes in the lives of individuals. Inevitably, he found the jousting of the French version too formal and artificial to give adequate expression to the struggle for liberty and integrity which forms the core of his interpretation, and chose to replace it with the reality of battle to the death. The result is something of a compromise between the set duel and warfare with limited forces, but this apparent confusion is probably due to the way in which the redactor's conception of the element developed as he worked on the battle-scene, evolving further and further away from the matter and spirit of the original.

The alliterative medium is also partly responsible for the nature and extent of this element. Alliterative verse is particularly well suited to express violent action, and, by an accumulation of brief, disjointed, descriptive phrases, to convey the swift-moving scenes of battle. The English poet clearly took pleasure in exploiting its capabilities to the full, and his enthusiasm has produced passages which, despite their repetitiveness, are amongst the most effective and original in the poem. But here, as in some similar passages, his medium may be said to have run away with him. It is significant that those elements which alliterative verse expresses most effectively, splendid settings and costumes, violent action and formal eloquence, bulk larger than their function in the redaction warrants and contrast strangely with the sparseness of the relatively undeveloped narrative in which they are set. And it must be admitted that in exploiting the merits of the alliterative medium so fully the redactor has not always kept the balance between these descriptive passages and the narration of events, for which its complexity makes it less suitable.

The peculiarities of the medium may also explain a number of minor distinctions between the French and English versions in the matter of nomenclature. Apart from Arthur, Kay, Gawain, and some familiar members of the Round Table who are mentioned incidentally, the characters in the alliterative poem bear different names from those in the original, and although some of these, such as Elynas, can be identified elsewhere in Medieval romance, others, including Colegrus himself, can not. The nature of his redaction compelled the English poet to alter and add to the names given in his source. In the French text the Riche Soudoier has no personal name and most of his followers are also anonymous, but

the greatly extended treatment of the battle sequences in the English work made it essential to identify the numerous combatants and distinguish the role of each in the complicated action. Clearly, alliteration was the controlling factor in the choice of names. The restrictions of alliterative verse, which caused the redactor to pass over the catalogue of Arthur's followers given in the original narrative (vide supra, pp. 321-2), also forced him to select names for members of both parties which could alliterate together as the opponents meet in combat, matching Gaudifeir with Galiot, Rannald with Rigal, Lyonel with Louys, and so on. Where the names of familiar romance heroes could supply a ready alliteration he has made use of them, but where nothing of the sort occurred to him he probably did not hesitate to invent a suitable name.⁽¹⁾ The name Golagrus has been variously explained both as borrowed and as invented: Madden suggested that it was related to that of the Galagars who appears in Salory,⁽²⁾ Trautmann that it was derived mistakenly from the name of the Chastel Orgueilleux, and Ketrick that it originated as "li gales gros" or "li galois gros", a phrase descriptive of a powerful knight whose castle stands, according to the English poet, "on the riche river of Rone"⁽³⁾ (1.1345).⁽⁴⁾ Whichever, if any, of these theories is accepted,

1) Gwynogres has been identified with the Gwynogres of Salory, Gaudifeir figures in the romance of Alexander the Great, while, of the others, Iwain is clearly the Yvain of the original Chastel Orgueilleux episode, and Galiot, Lyonel, Redmar, Gyromalances, Cadur and Rannald appear elsewhere in the Matter of Britain (see J.F. Ketrick, op.cit., pp. 115-16). Other romances, lost to us, may have supplied further names, but as they are names only and not associated with characteristic material to the story, the basis on which they were selected is more important than the source from which they were drawn.

2) See, Sir F. Madden, ed. Gyr Savayne, Society Club, London, 1839, p. 141.

3) "Nicht aus Galagars, sondern aus dem (Nischlich für ein substantiv gehaltenen) orgueilleux (orgueil) glaube ich den namen Golagrus entstanden" (M. Trautmann, ed. Salory, II, pp. 395-440, Halle, 1879, p. 403.)

4) See, J.F. Ketrick, op.cit., p. 114.

there can be little doubt that the demands of the medium, the fact that Golagrus must repeatedly alliterate with Gawain, was a material factor in the choice of the name.

This matter of names is a minor one, but the problem in ^{the} manipulation of alliterative verse which it presents and the solution supplied by the redactor's readiness to supplement his original, are characteristic of the redaction as a whole. The use of the alliterative medium in Golagrus and Gawain is a factor of fundamental importance, affecting the construction, the narration, and even the interpretation of the romance. So far as construction is concerned, it is obvious at a glance that the English poet had a conception of romance form quite different from that held by the various authors of the Roman de Perceval. Their compilation, haphazardly evolved over a period of many years, could scarcely be expected to follow any uniform plan of construction, but even the underlying theme of the Grail quest, which gave a certain formal unity to Chrétien's original, was virtually abandoned in favour of a chain of secular adventures, casually interlinked in a sequence which is limited only by the failure of each author's powers of invention. Clearly, the medium in which they worked did not exercise any formative influence upon them, - neither the facile octosyllabic couplet, nor, still less, the later prose. The English poet, on the other hand, was inevitably restrained, at least in the scope of his redaction, by the choice of a complex stanza combining rhyme and alliteration: faithful reproduction, sequence by sequence, of the Perceval complex, or any considerable portion of it, in such a medium, would have been a lengthy, slow and painful process.

This limitation in scope is, however, a purely negative factor, whereas comparison of Golagrus and Gawain with the Roman de Perceval

suggests a positive approach to the problem of form on the redactor's part. Faced with the necessity to limit his treatment of the original he chose to deal intensively and in detail with two incidents only, rather than attempt a wider coverage of its many adventures. His conception of a romance clearly involved more than the sketching of a narrative outline, however close-packed or interesting in itself. Equally, his selection and combination of two separate incidents suggests that certain topics appeared to him better suited to romance treatment than others which we can assume were available to him. He apparently preferred the more conventional type of knightly adventure to the mysterious Grail episodes, the forthright and familiar Gawain to more subtle and complicated heroes, and the issues of courage and honour to the more questionable aspects of contemporary codes, such as those involved in the affair of the Despisable de lui. And just as his selective taste prevented him from accepting the compromise of a romance compiled from the many Gawain episodes in the original, so his sense of form led him to reject the technique of enchainment by which the original authors linked adventures together in haphazard sequence, treating each as of equal importance. Instead, he has subordinated the incident of Kay's encounter with the dwarf, making it merely preparatory to the meeting of Colagrus and Gawain which forms the core of his redaction. There can be little doubt that this method of combining the two incidents was as much part of the redactor's policy as his limited selection of episodes, and that neither was forced upon him merely by inability to cope with the unwieldy bulk of the original. He was sufficiently in control of his source-matter to make ready use of the plot machinery which it provided where it suited his purpose. For example, he has

retained the device of Arthur's journey as a means of linking the separate episodes, though he has telescoped the sequence of events, and, similarly, he has supplied another assent to fill the role of Bran de Lis before the Chastel Orgueilleux, recognising the value of these devices in advancing the action and supplying essential explanatory details. But where the narrative aids supplied by the source proved unsuitable for his purpose he has not hesitated to invent alternatives, such as the pilgrimage, which, in the English version, provides the initial motive for the action. It is notable that both in what he invents and what he borrows he employs the conventional techniques of romance, suggesting that he was not primarily interested in form or technique for their own sake, but merely in achieving a formal world appropriate to his matter and to his alliterative medium.

The nature of the medium also required him to develop a narrative technique very different from that of the French romance in either its verse or prose forms. The high competence, both technical and poetic, which he has achieved suggests a poet who was master of the alliterative stanza, aware of its limitations and skilled in compensating for them by exploiting its capabilities to the full. At first sight the stanza seems totally unsuited to the function for which it has been employed. Its complicated inter-linking of rhyme and alliteration, and the tortured expression necessary to satisfy the requirements of both, make direct narration of events in connected sequence extremely difficult. It is still more difficult to combine such a narrative with the details of human interest which can lend it reality, without verbally inflating them to a degree where they are incongruously out of proportion with the general context. Slavish adherence to the diffuse, circumstantial sequence of the French text could only have produced a slow-moving, over-

blown narrative, cumbered by the minute expression of unimportant incidentals. To avoid this the English redactor has carved out a narrative sequence of his own: selecting the essential facts from his source, he has conveyed them in an abbreviated form which outlines the main action of the original in a few stanzas only.

Had his interest in the French romance been confined to the adventures which form its narrative framework his alliterative version would have been no more than a brief résumé of the original. But his appreciation of the social, human and emotional background to the action led him to attempt to replace the numerous detailed touches by which these elements are conveyed in the French narrative. In doing so he exploited the particular merits of his alliterative medium: its ability to describe elaborate settings and complex action by adding detail to detail, disjointedly, yet with cumulative effect, and, by the very rigidity of its movement, to express exalted emotions with appropriate, formal eloquence. Here and there in such passages he has used details which are reminiscent of the original, but they are no more than isolated features in lengthy sections, often of more than a hundred lines, which are essentially his own creation. Often they far exceed their function, -most notably in the descriptions of combat-, suggesting that to the alliterative poet this sort of writing was itself a source of satisfaction. Freed from the restraint imposed by his source he was at liberty to employ his imagination and exploit his medium fully and creatively.

These extra-narrative passages are so numerous, so sustained, and so distinctive in character as to affect the whole nature of the English redaction. The French narrative develops smoothly and coherently, action being interspersed with sufficient descriptive detail to

sketch in a conventional background, only rarely,--as in the early-morning scene between Gervin and Ivain[vide supra, p. 367]--, achieving sufficient depth of human interest to carry conviction for a modern reader. The English version, by contrast, is laid out on broad, sweeping lines, the action advancing rapidly and erratically in a compressed narrative, frequently interrupted by passages which fill in the background, emotional as well as physical, so fully and graphically as to lend a convincing air of reality to the whole. This entails a change in atmosphere scarcely less extreme than the change in narrative technique, and, to some extent, arising from it. The somewhat detached manner of the French narrator has produced a conventional romance, impersonal in atmosphere, without any particular conviction to give it force. The English narrative, on the other hand, reflects an author who was personally engaged, transforming his material by the vivid realism of his imagination, recreating convention in human terms, and exploiting the emphatic quality of alliterative verse for his purpose. The fundamental reorganisation involved in adapting the narrative to the alliterative stanza make it clear that, for the redactor, the choice of medium was a matter of primary importance. The enthusiasm with which he has exploited it suggests that, in his eyes, it had a validity as the medium of a romance which outweighed its defects. It also suggests that his conception of a romance was essentially a poetic one: had he merely been interested in making the matter of a French romance available to those who could not read the original he would not have employed a medium so demanding and inflexible, so liable to complicate the process of story-telling.

The choice of such a medium postulates a redactor who was more than a hack translator, whose interests were, to some extent at

least, literary and artistic. Its very intractability, which made the literal reproduction of the original impossible, compelled him to approach his material independently and to recreate it imaginatively. The extent to which he considered his function as redactor to be a creative one is indicated by his fundamental reinterpretation of the central theme in the romance, and by the way in which everything in the English version has been made to conform with his personal conception of the story. The central incident of the Book of the Chastel Orgueilleux was originally conceived as a conflict between the codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love. It is a conventional romance situation, deriving its interest from the somewhat mechanical interaction of the codes, to which the characters respond with the inevitability of automata. Yet the English author saw it, not as an artificial dilemma, but as a genuine human situation, in which the crisis is produced and the solution provided by the normal human reactions of the protagonists. His imagination, ignoring the mechanics of the original, based on the fundamental conflict, conceiving it not as an empty clash of codes but as a duel of personalities actuated by regard for their own and each other's honour. Inevitably, the substitution of character for code as the source of the action involved a complete reinterpretation, not just of the crisis itself, but of everything preliminary to it. The whole redaction is directed towards the preparation of an effect very different from that intended by the original author: "all the developments of plot and all the careful suggestions of character suddenly unite to create a dilemma both quite unusual and at least as natural in the circumstances of the time as many of those upon which the plots of the classical French tragedies were made to hang". "At once the intention behind the earlier effects becomes apparent, and we are obliged to concede that although these

may have been over-elaborate and un-economical they did nevertheless serve a functional purpose by preparing a milieu in which such a conflict of principles could arise. The design and the dramatic situation are rare and noteworthy in medieval literature⁽¹⁾. Despite the origins of its material the English romance is undeniably an organic whole, rooted in character and making its appeal to the imagination on an acceptable human level. And in all these respects it is entitled to claim the credit of an original creation.

In so far as it can be considered representative, Colagrins and Gawayn suggests that Scottish authors of the Fifteenth century were unusually original and individualistic in their conception of romance. In form it contrasts strongly, not only with the Thirteenth century Perceval, but also with the contemporary Morte D'Arthur, both representative of the romance in its later development, suggesting a return to the relatively simple, limited and concentrated format of the earlier examples. The use of the complicated alliterative stanza at a time when, in England as in France, prose had become the usual medium of romance, is also reminiscent of the earlier conception of romance as essentially a poetic form. And, most important, the interpretation of the story in human terms indicates a reversion from the increasingly artificial romance of the later Middle Ages, with its formal manipulation of the social codes, to a narrative based upon natural human reactions to moral rather than social forces. In all these respects the powerful formative influence of the alliterative medium is evident. The fundamental alterations associated with its use have produced in Colagrins and Gawayn a classic example of the extremes to which the process of redaction can be carried, resulting in a poem which is not merely a copy of its original but a new creation, with its own criteria of form and content.

1) G. Kane, Middle English Literature, London, 1951, p. 33.

CHAPTER VI

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Few problems in Middle English scholarship have proved more frustrating than the attempt to determine the sources of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.⁽¹⁾ Progressive research has defined the period and place of composition with as much precision as can be expected in the case of an anonymous poem of the fourteenth century.⁽²⁾ But a lengthy investigation has not so far discovered any feasible source for the alliterative text, or produced any theory of origin which has won general acceptance. Where many Middle English works are concerned the solution of such a problem is of historical or academic interest only. In this case, however, it is a matter of artistic importance.

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- 1) Sir F. Madden, Syr Gawayne, Bannatyne Club, London, 1839; R. Morris, Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, E.E.T.S., 4, London, 1864, revised 1869; revised I. Gollancz 1897; I. Gollancz, Facsimile of MS. Cotton Nero A.1, E.E.T.S., 162, London, 1923; J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Oxford, 1925; Sir I. Gollancz, M. Day and H.S. Jeantson, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, E.E.T.S., 210, London, 1940.
 - 2) The text is generally dated c.1370, though various dates as late as the last decade of the century have been proposed:— '...the last quarter of the fourteenth century' (J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, op.cit., p.xxi); '...the late seventies or early eighties of the

In the alliterative Gawain, almost alone amongst the Middle English romances, we recognise a mature, balanced, integrated composition, a work of literature in its own right. To understand fully the creative process which produced it we must know the nature of its sources, the form in which they reached the alliterative author, and what was involved in adapting them to his specific purpose. This is the real aim of the source investigation, which has sometimes been lost sight of in the course of the search.

The early attempts to trace the origin of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight followed familiar lines and promised a ready solution. Madden, the first editor, accepting the poet's references to "þe bok"⁽¹⁾ at their face value, looked for a written source in contemporary French romance. He found what he regarded as the "immediate original" in the Livre de Carados, part of the First Continuation of Chrétien's Perceval, though he noted parallels to certain incidents in a later prose redaction of the Conte del Graal known as Parlesvaus, and in La Mule sans Frain,⁽²⁾ a verse romance of the early Thirteenth century. His⁽³⁾ opinion was accepted for many years, and in 1883 Miss M.C. Thomas produced evidence of correspondences between Gawain and the Carados episode in matters of detail, which, according to her, confirmed the⁽⁴⁾ derivation. But she also found similar links with other sections of

(Cont.) century? (H.L. Savage, The Gawain-Poet, Chapel Hill, N. Carolina, 1956, p. 141) The dialect has been identified as North West Midlands (Oakden, Alliterative Poetry, Vol. I, p. 86), but there is no general agreement on a more precise location: "....south Lancashire rather than Cheshire..." (J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, op.cit., p. xxiv); "The poet....may have been reared either in Lancashire or in the Yorkshire West Riding that adjoins Lancashire:" (H.L. Savage, op.cit., p. 132.)

- 1) "It is professedly not of his own invention, nor founded upon popular tradition, for he expressly refers at the commencement to written authority..." (op.cit., p. 305.) He cites l. 34, l. 690 and l. 2523.
- 2) Ibid., pp. 305-7.
- 3) See, for example, R. Morris, op.cit., p. viii.

the Roman de Perceval where the general narrative bore no resemblance to the English story. ⁽¹⁾ Already the search had become complicated, not by lack of feasible sources but by evidence which linked Gawain with a number of French romances and implied an elaborate process of compilation from them. Gaston Paris, writing in 1888, added to the number the Thirteenth century Runbaut, in which he detected the type of correspondence found elsewhere by Miss Thomas, but rejected her theory of composite origin in favour of a common source for the English work and the various French romances. ⁽²⁾ His hypothesis related only to the content of the first and fourth divisions of Sir Gawain, the Challenge or Beheading Game. For the second theme of the romance, the Temptation, Miss Thomas, confining her search to the twin forms of the Perceval, ⁽³⁾ had found an original in the episode of Gawain and Guigambresil. The resemblance in matters of detail was, however, dismissed by Paris as "très faible" since it was not supported by any conformity in the ⁽⁴⁾ essential basis of the two stories. The rejection of this false lead ended the attempt to find an immediate source for Sir Gawain, in whole or in part, amongst the extant French romances.

(Cont) 4) M.C. Thomas, Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight: A Comparison with the French Perceval, Zurich, 1883, pp. 37-50.

1) Ibid., pp. 58-65.

2) "...précisément parce que le récit du Green Knight contient des traits qui se retrouvent tantôt dans l'un tantôt dans l'autre des récits parallèles, on doit conclure qu'il ne provient d'aucun d'eux, et qu'il nous représente une dérivation indépendante de la source commune, c'est-à-dire un poème français épisodique, qui avait pour sujet principal ce qui dans les autres textes ne forme qu'un incident au milieu d'autres" (G. Paris in Histoire littéraire de la France, Vol. XXX, Paris, 1888, p. 72.)

3) Op.cit., pp. 53-8.

4) "...surtout il faut remarquer que dans le Perceval nous n'avons pas, comme dans le Vert Chevalier, une épreuve à laquelle l'hôte de

Gaston Paris had pointed out that the theme of the
(1)
Challenge is also to be found in Celtic literature, and in 1897 Miss
Jessie Weston compared Sir Gawain and its various French analogues
with two versions of an incident known as The Champion's Bargain in
the Irish epic of Fled Briorend, preserved in a manuscript of c.1100,
(2)
though dated as early as the Ninth century. Finding many details of
the Celtic legend more clearly reproduced in the Gawain episode than
in the Livre de Carados or the other French texts, she agreed in re-
(3)
jecting them as possible sources of the alliterative poem. Her general
study of Arthurian romance connected it with the Celtic legends and
Gawain with Cuohulinn, the hero of The Champion's Bargain, and she
suggested that the Irish versions were likely to provide a more
reliable guide to the original of the English narrative than its
analogues in French literature.

The first detailed study of the problem, by G.L. Kittredge,
(4)
made valid use of evidence from both French and Celtic sources.
Kittredge accepted the Irish version of the Beheading Game as
"essentially identical, even in details, with the shape which it takes

(Cont.) Gauvain le soumet exprès, et où la dame sert de complice à
son mari" (op.cit., p.78.)

1) Ibid., p.77.

2) See J.L. Weston, The Legend of Sir Gawain, London, 1897, pp.85-102.

3) Carados seemed to her the least likely of such sources: "It seems
difficult to understand how any one could have regarded this version,
ill-motived as it is, and utterly lacking in the archaic details of
the English poem, as the source of that work. It should probably
rather be considered as the latest in form, if not in date, of all
the versions" (Ibid., p.89.)

4) G.L. Kittredge, A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight, Cambridge,
Mass., 1916.

(1)
 in Gawain and the Green Knight, and assumed a specifically literary
 connection between them. (2)
 On the grounds that the outline of The
Champion's Bargain is also clearly discernible in Caradoc, Perlesvaus
 and La Mule sans Frain he decided that the legend "somehow" passed from
 Irish literature into French, (3)
 where, presumably, the alliterative author
 discovered it. Comparing the existing forms in French and English
 with the versions in Fled Briceand, Kittredge suggested that Gawain
 and Caradoc were independently derived from a common source, which he
 labelled R. (4)
 "This source was undoubtedly in French and in all pro-
 bability was a brief episodic romance of Gawain, to whom it was nat-
 ural for any French writer to attach such an adventure when it att-
 racted his attention." (5)
 Convinced by a number of points reminiscent of
 the Celtic text in which La Mule sans Frain differed from Caradoc and

1) Op.cit., p.9.

2) "The close agreement between the stories cannot be fortuitous. Nor can it be due to the common utilising of a casual bit of vagrant tradition. The Irish tale is carefully wrought out in detail with conscious art, and its correspondence with the English poem extends to certain minutiae which are not folk-lore, but literary elaboration" (Ibid., p.15.) "In the complete absence, then, of any indication to the contrary, we are forced to infer that the Challenge in Gawain and the Green Knight goes back, in some way, to an elaborate literary version of The Champion's Bargain in Irish" (Ibid., p.17.)

3) Ibid., p.9.

4) "The Caradoc version and the Gawain version are mutually independent; for each.....preserves important details of the Irish story that do not appear in the other. Yet the Caradoc version and the Gawain version resemble each other closely in noteworthy particulars in which both differ from the Irish tale" (Ibid., pp.36-7.) "...the special agreements between the Caradoc and the Gawain version over against the Irish story prove beyond question that the author of the Caradoc and the author of the French Gawain drew independently from a common source" (Ibid., p.38.)

5) Ibid., p.38.

Gawain that it could not have been derived from R, he was forced to postulate an earlier intermediary version (O) in which these primitive traits still survived. The relation of Perlesvaus to the other texts proved more difficult to determine. It, too, contains certain of the Celtic features which distinguish La Mule sans Frain from texts of the R-group, and Kittredge found no conclusive proof that it derived them directly from La Mule or from O as their common source. Indeed, he thought it possible to explain away the points in question and accept Perlesvaus as another member of the R-group. ⁽¹⁾

In summary, Kittredge's theory of the descent of the Beheading Game from the early Irish epic to the Fourteenth century Gawain implied two intermediate forms: "...an episodical romance of Gawain (O), probably composed in England in the twelfth century in the Anglo-Norman dialect. O is lost, but we may feel sure that its plot was confined to the story of the Challenge, and that it followed the Irish with reasonable fidelity..." "About 1200 or a little earlier, O was revised or rewritten by some Frenchman, probably in a dialect of Continental French. This reworking (which we call R) was more courtly and polished than O, but did not depart from it in any essential feature, remaining an episodical romance of Gawain with its plot confined to the Challenge?" "Another French poet combined the Challenge as told by R with an entirely different tale of Gawain (the Temptation), and thus constructed a highly ingenious plot in honour of that hero. His work is preserved to us in an English version, our Gawain and the Green Knight." ⁽²⁾

In searching for the source of the Temptation incident

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- 1) "On the whole....though I am convinced that Perlesvaus did not borrow the Challenge from La Mule sans Frain, I cannot make up my mind positively between O and R. I incline towards O (however)." Ibid., p. 75.
 - 2) Ibid., p. 75.

Kittredge was guided by his analysis of its original significance:

"...we may unhesitatingly recognize its central incident as one of those tests or proofs to which supernatural beings are wont to subject mortals who venture into their other-world domain." (1) Amongst the myriad forms taken by such tests he classed the Gawain episode with those in which the hero, by unwittingly fulfilling certain pre-ordained conditions, frees the person who imposes the test from enchantment, and often from a monstrous shape to which he has been condemned. Recognising that in their later forms such stories are often rationalised, the supernatural nature of the testing agent forgotten, and the purpose of the test obscured until it becomes merely 'the custom of the castle', Kittredge examined episodes of the kind in the French romances of Yder, Hunbaut and Le Chevalier au Lion, the Middle English Carle of Carlisle, two Italian cansoni of the Fourteenth century and some Latin exempla. From the recurrence in such diverse contexts of an adventure in which the hero, -sometimes Gawain, sometimes not-, secures the disenchantment of his host by resisting the advances made to him by the host's wife or daughter, he postulated the existence, at one time, of a prototype version from which the main lines of the Temptation incident in Sir (2) Gawain were drawn.

The fact that the literary ancestry of the Temptation motif was so much less concrete had led earlier scholars to give

1) Ibid., 76.

2) "This reconstructed version is no fancy sketch. It is preserved to all intents and purposes in the group of poems to which the Carle of Carlisle belongs. Indeed, except for the active temptation on the lady's part, it might serve as a reconstruction of the French romance to which all the poems of the Carle group (the Carle, the Chevalier and the cansoni) have been shown to go back, and this feature does survive in the Yder in a very primitive form! (Ibid., p. 106.)

disproportionate attention to the Beheading Game, but Kittredge stressed the parity of the two themes, believing that the impulse to combine them came from their basic similarity as tests of heroic qualities and the fact that the agent of the test in both cases was a person of strange appearance and supernatural powers. (1) The motif which knits the two episodes together, the exchange of winnings between Gawain and his host, he regarded as an invention by the French author who, in his belief, made the compilation. (2) In corroboration of his general theory he cited the evidence of The Turk and Gawain, a Fourteenth or early Fifteenth century English romance, in which the Challenge is used, as in Gawain, to draw the hero into an adventure which ends with the dismemberment of his challenger. In his opinion this version of the story, if not actually based on the French Gawain, or upon the earlier O or R versions, at least furnished an independent demonstration of the process by which the plot of Gawain was evolved. (3)

Almost simultaneously with the publication of Kittredge's study, another American scholar, J. R. Hulbert, approached the problem from an entirely different starting-point. (4) He questioned the previous assumption that the Challenge and the Temptation motifs had existed as separate entities before they were interwoven to form the plot of Sir

1) Ibid., pp. 107-9.

2) "The whole transaction depends upon a state of things which could not exist until the Challenge and the Temptation were combined in a single plot. There was, then, no magic lace in the version of the Temptation that the French author used; neither was there, in all likelihood, an agreement to exchange winnings? (Ibid., p. 114.)

3) Ibid., pp. 118-25.

4) J. R. Hulbert, "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyght", Med. Phil., XIII, Chicago, 1916, pp. 433-62 and 689-730.

Gawain, and sought to prove that they were originally connected in a way which illuminated the original significance of the story. (1) Of the two occurrences of The Champion's Bargain in Fled Briorend Kittredge had ignored the earlier, known as the 'Uath' version from the name of the challenger in the Beheading Game. Hulbert pointed out that in this text, following upon the Beheading Game, Guchallinn is further tested by Curnal, with whose wife Blathnat, according to other Celtic tales, he had a liasion, eventually killing Curoi for her sake. He saw this association as evidence of an earlier form of the story in which Blathnat, a fée, used Curoi, a shape-shifter, to test the valour of her chosen lover in the Beheading Game. (2) Amongst the French versions of the beheading motif he recognised the story of the Fairy-mistress most clearly in La Hule Sans Frain, which he considered more primitive in its essentials than the other romances where the original meaning of the Celtic legend had been disguised by rationalisation. (3) From the

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- 1) "If the two parts of GCK were originally distinct, we should expect to find the beheading story in its other occurrences connected with plots and used for purposes different from those of GCK. On the other hand, if we find in several cases that the beheading story is connected with an action similar to the latter part of GCK, we must suppose that the two parts are not separable. Further, if a study of these cases shows that they can be referred to a definite, established type of story, we may be able to understand more clearly the exact nature of GCK and get some idea of how it reached its present form? (Ibid., p.434.)
 - 2) "...we have in the tale of Curoi the beheading game in connection with a fairy-mistress story as a test which the hero must meet in order to win the fairy, and we also have the proposer of the test (Curoi) established as a shape-shifter? (Ibid., p.439.)
 - 3) "In fact, we have in MSF a fairy-mistress story with very slight alterations and decidedly primitive characteristics. Hence here again, as in the Fled Briorend, we have the head-cutting episode used as a test for the achievement of a fairy mistress. Furthermore, the notably primitive elements in the story give it much greater weight as evidence than the Péroseval and Parlesvaus versions? (Ibid., p.440)

dual role played by the Green Knight, the stress laid upon his
 eel~~sur~~, and his association with the Green Chapel,--identified as a
 fairy mound--, Hulbert interpreted Gawain in its entirety as the testing
 of a mortal by a shape-shifter, an Otherworld creature. The reason for
 the test given by the English poet,--the enmity of Morgan la Fay--, he
 found unconvincing and suggested that its original function was to
 prove the hero worthy of the love of a ⁽¹⁾ fée. Two significant differ-
 ences in the alliterative poem,--the fact that the lady offers her love
 to the knight before he has submitted to the beheading-test, and that
 she does so merely in order to try him, not from genuine affection--,
 he attributed to the alterations of a story-teller who, for a special
 purpose, wished to heighten the moral victory won by Gawain. ⁽²⁾ Early
 rationalisers having converted the shape-shifter, whom the fée used as
 her instrument in testing the hero, into her husband, later authors felt
 it immoral that she should make a sincere offer of love to another man,
 and interpreted the incident, on the model of the other main episode in
 the story, as a further trial of Gawain. ⁽³⁾ That the test was one not for
 chastity but for loyalty was indicated, in Hulbert's view, by the

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- 1) "The fact that in the Fled Bricrend and MSF the beheading game is used as a test for the winning of a fairy mistress suggests that such may be its purpose here? (Ibid., p.458.)
 - 2) "Now at some time, a story-teller conceived the idea of making this story a poetic explanation of the founding of an order, probably because the green lace reminded him of the badge of that order. Wishing to associate with the order the idea of loyalty, he altered the nature of the material slightly by having Gawain resist the love of the lady, and he transferred the incident of Gawain and the lady to the hospitable castle, so as to bring the beheading test after it and make the test an evidence of Gawain's loyalty? (Ibid., p.459)
 - 3) "The story in its older form gave a test of courage, and the fact that courage was a knightly virtue doubtless suggested to some redactor the idea of developing a work which by various tests would show forth a perfect knight, and give a meaning to the green lace. Hence the second test, to define more exactly the chivalrous ideal? (Ibid., pp.459-4)

incorporation, on the redactor's initiative, of the exchange of winnings between Gawain and the lady's husband, a motif found elsewhere in Medieval romance. This addition, as well as the general reinterpretation of the Fairy-mistress story, he attributed to the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.⁽¹⁾

A similar conception of the essential unity of the Gawain plot in its folk-lore form also underlies the theory advanced by R.S. Loomis in his general study of the relations between Celtic myth and Arthurian romance.⁽²⁾ After examining The Champion's Bargain and related legends he proposed to identify Curoi and Cuchulinn as two forms of the same heroic personality, the former representing the old sun-god who is overthrown and succeeded by the latter, his younger self.⁽³⁾ On etymological grounds he also identified Cuchulinn (as Gwylan, his counterpart in Welsh legend)⁽⁴⁾ with Gawain, and Curoi (who often adopts the disguise of a bachlach, a herdsman or churl)⁽⁵⁾ with Sir Bercilak.

- 1) "...I think it probable that the author of GGK was the person who transformed the relations of the lady and Gawain into a test of loyalty, and that he also made the connection with an order? (Ibid., p. 703)
- 2) R.S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance, New York, 1927.
- 3) "...may we not tentatively conjecture that Cuchulinn is a diminutive Curoi, the young sun-god, who like Zeus kills the old sun and lightning god and takes over the symbols of his power?" (Ibid., p. 57.)
- 4) "...Rhys long since pointed out that the mythical Welsh figure Gwri corresponds in a way to Cuchulinn? (Ibid., pp. 61-2.)
"Furthermore, Welsh myth knows both a little Gwri and a big Gwri, Gwylan and Gwylan-mach? (Ibid., p. 62.) "...the earliest form of Gawain is that on the Modena portal, -Galvagin.... But everything becomes perfectly clear if one sees in Galvagin the Welsh epithet of Gwylan, Gwallt Avwyn. For Gwylan is no other than little Gwri and is therefore identical with Cuchulinn? (Ibid., p. 63.)
- 5) "...I think there can hardly be any question that all these names, including Sir Bercilak, are derived from the Irish bachlach? (Ibid., p. 60.)

In consequence, he saw the struggle between the disguised Bercilak and Sir Gawain in the Beheading Game as "the tale of the encounter of the old and the young sun-god, when the old god is beheaded on condition that the young god shall himself lose his head a year later;⁽¹⁾ influenced by a traditional story-pattern of an exchange of blows which, illogically, made the aged Curoi test the valour of the youthful Cuchulinn.⁽²⁾ Loomis, like Hulbert, stressed the importance of the 'Uath' version of the Challenge in which Curoi's role is filled by two enigmatic characters known as Yellow Son of Fair and Terror Son of Great Fear, who, according to him, represent aspects of his dual nature as a sun-god who is also a god of storm and thunder, and correspond to the twin forms assumed by the challenger in the romance version of the story.⁽³⁾ And, like Hulbert, he regarded the associated tradition which made Cuchulinn compete with Curoi for the love of his wife Blathnat as the ultimate source of the Temptation motif in Gawain.⁽⁴⁾

1) Ibid., p.60.

2) Ibid., p.61.

3) "If we are right, the story should mean: The hero first goes to Curoi in his solar aspect. He is then sent by Curoi to be tested by himself in his thunderous aspect. The hero is accompanied by a guide. Precisely these three points are incorporated in the story of Gawain and the Green Knight. For the Green Knight in his capacity of host to Gawain betrays that he is the old sun god: we learn that he is 'a huge warrior', 'of great age', that 'broad and bright was his beard and all beaver-hued', 'with a face as fierce as fire'! Finally at the end of the poem the Green Knight reveals his identity with the host with face as fierce as fire. Both in nature and in function, then, Sir Bercilak the host corresponds to Yellow Son of Fair! (Ibid., p.69.)

4) "The old tradition of the love affair between young Curoi or Cuchulinn and old Curoi's wife, which has been so distorted in Gawain and the Green Knight as to give us simply the temptation motif, still survives in Owein and Ivain. For not only does the young sun god, Owein or Ivain, slay the storm god and take his place, but he also carries his wife, just as Cuchulinn slew Curoi and took Blathnat! (Ibid., p.71.)

Loomis's theory of the origin of the alliterative ~~romance~~ postulated a process by which these two episodes in the struggle between the old sun-god and his younger successor, in common with such myths generally, were transmuted into familiar folk-lore patterns and variously rationalised by the different narrators who made use of the common story-matter.⁽¹⁾ He identified the dominant pattern in this instance as that of the test, by which the aging sun-god proved the quality of his successor, by which Curoi tried the valour of Cuchulinn and Sir Bercilak of Gawain.⁽²⁾ The original significance of the struggle for the love of Blathnat was made to conform to this pattern, in which her role is to test the hero's loyalty by her temptation.⁽³⁾ Loomis admitted that this theory of the intermingling of two adventures of Cuchulinn was merely hypothetical and not demonstrated by the existing Irish texts: "...yet there is nothing more certain than that the Celtic story-tellers regarded it as the essence of their art to combine into harmony the various stories about a

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- 1) Amongst the various "moulds for myths" into which he believed the struggle between Curoi and Cuchulinn had been cast Loomis included the Exchange-of-blows motif, the Combat of Father and Son, and the seasonal battle of Summer and Winter. See Ibid., pp. 75-83.
 - 2) "The narrative pattern which has most deeply affected the story of Gawain and the Green Knight is the test pattern. In its first form, we may believe, the encounter between Cuchulinn and Curoi was represented as a true quarrel, a genuine life-and-death struggle; and the loving passages between Cuchulinn and Blathnat in the ultimate source of Gawain and the Green Knight by no means consisted of a calculated temptation on her side and a virtuous rebuff on his, but were lusty and passionate enough. The complete overturning of these established relationships is due to the thorough-going application of the concept of the old god as a tester of the younger!" (Ibid., pp. 81-2.)
 - 3) "The next step was naturally to fit Blathnat into the same scheme. The result is apparent in Gawain and the Green Knight, where the lady's function is to test the hero's loyalty, as it is her husband's to test his courage!" (Ibid., p. 82.)

given figure. It is entirely possible, therefore, as Hulbert has maintained, that Gawain and the Green Knight may represent with some fidelity a combination already made in Ireland⁽¹⁾ Unlike Hulbert, however, he made no attempt to reconstruct the evolution of the plot on the evidence of the other texts usually cited, regarding even the versions of the Beheading Game as independently derived from the Celtic original.⁽²⁾ The nature of his study made him more interested in features of Sir Gawain which confirmed his theory of the Celtic origin of Arthurian romance in general, than in the evolution of the particular legend or in the form in which it is likely to have reached the English author.

Following upon the publication of Loomis's conclusions other scholars, working along the same lines, attempted to fill in the Celtic background of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight more uniformly and in greater detail. Of these the most painstaking was Miss Alice Buchanan, whose examination of both versions of the Challenge in Fled Bricreud and the other legends in which Cuchulinn is involved with Curoi and Blathnat, convinced her that their connection with Sir Gawain was even more complex than Loomis had supposed.⁽³⁾ She rejected Kittredge's identification of the unique source of the Challenge in Sir Gawain in a single episode of Fled Bricreud,⁽⁴⁾ finding closer

1) Ibid., p.60.

2) "There are seven versions of this story in Arthurian romance.... Kittredge has declared that at least four of these are independent of each other, and I go so far as to believe that all seven are independent of each other" (Ibid., p.59.)

3) A. Buchanan, "The Irish Framework of Gawain and the Green Knight", P.M.L.A., XLVII, Cambridge, Mass., 1932, pp.315-38.

4) "Kittredge's simple solution of the derivation of the Beheading Test motif in Arthurian romance from a single Irish story is inadequate to explain the many permutations and combinations of elements from the Curoi cycle which we have been able to trace" (ibid., p.338.)

parallels to some features in the 'Uath' text, a fact which suggested to her that the form of this incident in the English poem was "the result of combining the two versions of the Beheading Test!"⁽¹⁾ She followed Loomis in interpreting Yellow Son of Fair and Terror Son of Great Fear as "disguises" assumed by Curoi, whose dual role as the host and tester of the hero she saw reproduced in the part played by Sir Bercilak as the Green Knight.⁽²⁾ And she, too, accepted the tradition of the love-affair between Cuchulinn and Blathnat as the origin of the Temptation episode, referring to a theory that it had once been included in Fled Briorend.⁽³⁾ In support of her belief "that traditions concerning Cuchulinn, Curoi, and Blathnat, found in old Irish texts whose language proves their priority to the French romances, were conflated to give us the plot of GCK,"⁽⁴⁾ she cited more than thirty points of correspondence between these and the English narrative.⁽⁵⁾ She found confirmatory evidence of a Celtic folk-tale combining the Challenge and the Temptation in other Arthurian stories "in which the influence

1) Ibid., p.317.

2) "Such a correspondence is beyond coincidence, and added to the four other features common to GCK and the Yellow and Terror version, makes certain a genetic relation between the two." (Ibid., p.325.)

3) "...Hulbert and Zimmer came to the conclusion that a love-passage between Cuchulinn and Blathnat had been deleted from the Irish tale!" "It is entirely possible, therefore, that the author of Briorend's Feast knew a version of Cuchulinn's visit to Curoi's castle where the young hero not only demonstrated his martial prowess but also his well-known ardent feeling for his host's wife!" (Ibid., p.326.)

4) Ibid., p.330.

5) Ibid., 328-9.

of the Curoi cycle is manifest and in which traces of both motifs appear⁽¹⁾;--the Fifteenth century English Carl of Carliale, an episode in Chrétien's Lancelot, and another in Malory's Morte d'Arthur. The recurrence, in different contexts, of the main features of the alliterative narrative convinced her "that a combination of the Templars and Beheading Game is traceable outside of Gawain and the Green Knight"⁽²⁾ and that the compilation was the work of Celtic story-tellers rather than Medieval romance-writers.⁽³⁾

These conclusions on the origin of the narrative framework naturally led to further attempts to discover Celtic sources even for incidental details in Sir Gawain. Loomis himself professed to see the original of Sir Bercilak's 'grene lace' in a magic girdle associated with Curoi in the Irish legends, and of Gawain's device of the pentangle in a charge supposed to have been borne by Cuchulinn on his shield.⁽⁴⁾ And, since it was part of his general theory that the common Celtic heritage of Arthurian legend was transmitted to the French romance-writers by way of Wales,⁽⁵⁾ he pursued details for which Irish traditions provided no obvious source in the Welsh legends. In the

1) Ibid., p.331.

2) Ibid., p.336.

3) "...many of the complex story-patterns which have come down into Arthurian romance must have taken shape in a period very close to that in which for linguistic reasons the authorities place the oldest part of Bricriu's Feast, namely, the ninth century?" (Ibid., p.338.)

4) R.S.Loomis, "More Celtic Elements in Gawain and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLII, Urbana, Ill., 1943, pp.149-84.

5) "We see Wales as the natural meeting place for Irish and Brythonic myth and saga; we see North Britain and Cornwall making their natural contributions; we see the Bretons of the Continent as the natural links between their cousins the Welsh and their neighbours the French" (R.S.Loomis, "By What Route did the Romantic Tradition of Arthur reach the French?" Med.Phil. XXXIII, Chicago, 1936, pp.225-36.)

Eleventh century mabinogi of Pwyll he found what he believed to be the origin of several circumstances in Gawain not previously accounted for, including the year's interval which separates the hero's two encounters with the Green Knight, and Sir Bercilak's preoccupation with hunting. Almost immediately, however, another scholar pointed out that, in order to find authority for the latter particular, it was not necessary to go outside the Irish tradition but merely to extend the search beyond the Ulster legends of Cuohulinn to the other cycles, which, he found, provided parallels to more fundamental features of the romance.⁽¹⁾

Indeed, as the search was increasingly extended the problem of finding Celtic originals for the components of Sir Gawain was complicated by the difficulty of reconciling the multiple identifications and divergent interpretations which were proposed. Much controversy centered round the person of the Green Knight and the significance of his role in the action. Miss Buchanan agreed with Loomis in detecting attributes of both sun and storm deity in Curoi and corresponding traits in the dual personality of the Green Knight, his romance counterpart.⁽²⁾ But W.A. Nitze, starting from a premise in keeping with the views of Loomis and the other folklorists,⁽³⁾ came to the conclusion that the origin of the story was a vegetation rather than a solar myth.

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- 1) See R.M. Smith, "Quinganbresil and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLV, Urbana, Ill., 1946, pp. 1-25.
 - 2) "Just as Bercilak the Host reveals solar features, so Bercilak the tester suggests his association with the storm in the powerful verses which describe the whetting of his ax, a common conception of the lightning weapon" (A. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 325.)
 - 3) "The premise of the new hypothesis (the judice) is the realization that such stories as Gawain and the Green Knight cannot be understood unless we are willing to keep our minds open to the idea that in addition to literary documents, popular ceremonies and rites may be of first-class importance in considering not only the derivation of a story but also the significance or 'myth' that originally produced it" (W.A. Nitze, "Is the Green Knight Story a Vegetation Myth?", Mod. Phil., XXXIII, pp. 351-86, Chicago, 1936, p. 365.)

His opinion was based chiefly on the form of the story contained in the Perlesvaus, but he detected elements of a vegetation myth in other romance versions of the legend,⁽¹⁾ notably, in Gawain, the colouring of the Green Knight and his accoutrements, and the contrast between Winter and verdant growth which runs through the alliterative poem. Yet another interpretation, by A.H. Krappe, revealed the Green Knight as a supernatural executioner, "in fact, the only deathless executioner known, namely Death itself,"⁽²⁾ whose proposal of the beheading game represents Death's perpetual challenge to mankind,⁽³⁾ and whose green colouring is associated with the dead.⁽⁴⁾

It was Krappe's purpose, in common with those who made other and different interpretations of the legend, to illuminate the Celtic background of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, but he started from an assumption which made it unnecessary to consider what significance

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- 1) "What I have aimed to make clear is that the Green Knight tale as it appears in the Perlesvaus represents a vegetation ritual or myth. Whether or not this was the basis of the story on which, together with various other elements, the Irish fili constructed his valour-testing 'game' is by no means so certain. But vestiges of such an origin seem to me to exist also in the other versions I have considered, - to a greater or less degree? (Ibid., p.366.)
 - 2) A.H. Krappe, "Who was the Green Knight?", Speculum, XIII, pp.206-15, Cambridge, Mass., 1938, p.208.
 - 3) "The mysterious Green Knight is none other than the Lord of Hades, who comes to challenge to a beheading game the heroes sitting around the fire, probably some All Hollowe'en night? "All these stories, of essentially the same pattern, have their basis and starting point in the simple psychological fact that to man there is nothing more terrible than Death and that it requires a knight sans peur et sans reproche to accept his grim challenge and to brave him? (Ibid., p.215.)
 - 4) Rejecting the conception of the Green Knight as a 'vegetation demon', Krappe pointed out that green was not uniquely associated with nature, but was also a fairy colour: "The reason for this peculiarity is not far to seek: the Celtic side are the dead ancestors..... and green is the colour of the dead and of death? (Ibid., p.211.)

this legendary matter may have had for the alliterative author: "The Middle English poem is the English version of a lost French composition..."⁽¹⁾ And this, in effect, has been the general assumption amongst those who have studied the problem, whatever their opinion as to the origin and evolution of the story-matter. The early commentators presumed, on the basis of the general relationship between French and English romance, that Gawain derived directly from a French original.⁽²⁾ Those who pioneered detailed research on the poem, whether, like Hulbert, they saw it as the development of a unified plot, or, like Kittredge, as the result of combining independent episodes, agreed that the immediate original of the alliterative version was a French romance.⁽³⁾ Their opinion has been accepted as the basis for most of the critical appraisals of Gawain as a work of literature which have so far been made.

This general assumption has, however, been opposed by two German scholars. The earlier of these, Dr. Else von Schaubert,⁽⁴⁾ accepted

1) Ibid., p.206.

2) "...il est extrêmement probable qu'elle ne fait que reproduire un poème français perdu" (G.Paris, loc.cit., p.71.) "The English poem is based on a French (Anglo-Norman?) account..." (W.H.Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, p.217.) "His original was, no doubt, in French or Anglo-French" (I.Gellanes in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol.I, Cambridge, 1907, p.327.)

3) "That the immediate source of Gawain and the Green Knight was a French poem is altogether probable" (G.L.Kittredge, op.cit., p.3.) Hulbert was less specific but he assumed that in the version upon which the alliterative poem was based the evolution of the legend was virtually complete and it had already been modified to the requirements of French romance. See, in particular, loc.cit., pp.692-3.

4) E.von Schaubert, "Der Englische Ursprung von Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyȝt", Englische Studien, LVII, pp.330-446, Leipzig, 1923.

Kittredge's derivation of the Challenge from The Champion's Bargain but rejected his conception of the Temptation as a test of the kind found in the Romance of Huon and the other texts which he associated with it, pointing out that the virtue displayed there is not loyalty towards the host but absolute obedience to his commands.⁽¹⁾ She found Huibert's theory of the Temptation as an integral part of the Celtic original equally unacceptable on the grounds that there is no trace of a Fairy-mistress in the extant text of Fled Bricrenn and that his identification of the motif in La Mule sans Frain rests upon a misinterpretation.⁽²⁾ As an alternative source for this episode she suggested a moral tale of the type represented by two anecdotes in the Vitas Patrum, concerning hermits who resist the advances made to them by beautiful women in trial of their virtue.⁽³⁾ But the chief interest of Dr. von Schaubert's study is her assertion that, whatever the source of the two main incidents in the story may have been, the English poet himself was responsible for combining them to form the plot of his romance.⁽⁴⁾ Her thesis was based on two considerations. Negatively, she thought it impossible that a French author, writing, according to Kittredge's dating of the hypothetical union of the twin motifs, in the full flood of

1) Loc.cit., pp.372-82.

2) Ibid., pp.359-68.

3) Ibid., pp.437-45. Dr. von Schaubert cited the tales from an Old French version, La Vie des Anciens Pères, but stressed the international character of such material, and Dr. Mabel Day has since pointed out, in her Introduction to Sullivan's edition of Gawain (op.cit., pp. xxx-xxxii), that one of them also occurs in The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry, which, there is reason to believe, was known to the Gawain-poet.

4) "Der Einfall, eine Legende mit einem Motiv der Artusepik zusammenarbeiten, lag nun, wie der ganze Charakter der mittelenglischen Literatur ohne weiteres bezeugt und das Beispiel der Avanture off

romance production, could have produced anything so crudely constructed, so poorly motivated and lacking in psychological penetration as she considered the alliterative poem to be.⁽¹⁾ And positively, she interpreted a number of contemporary Middle English poems in which two episodes, one moral and one chivalric, are set side by side in an Arthurian framework, as typifying the process by which Sir Gawain was produced in contradistinction to the method of enchainement used by French romance-writers of the period.⁽²⁾

The existence of what he regarded as significant flaws in the alliterative poem also led Otto Löhmnn to deny that it could have been based directly upon a French original.⁽³⁾ He, too, accepted The Champion's Bargain as representing the ultimate source of the

(Cont.) Arthure erläutert, einen mittelenglischen Dichter ausserordentlich viel näher als dem Verfasser französischer Artusromane und so liefert also die soeben geführte Quellenuntersuchung einen weiteren Stützpunkt für die früher bereits mit Entschiedenheit aufgestellte und eingehend begründete Behauptung, dass GOK als englische Originalkomposition angesehen werden müsse! (Ibid., p. 446.)

- 1) "Was wir an den französischen Artusromanen bewundern, und was auch in fast allen neueren Arbeiten über den einen oder anderen derselben nachdrücklich hervorgehoben wird, ist gerade die fast ausnahmslos sehr gute, oft sogar geradezu glänzende Komposition. Ist dann aber denkbar, dass ein Franzose, - und zwar nach Kittredge um 1250, also zu einer Zeit, die nach Gaston Paris als Epigonenseit gerade besonderes Gewicht auf Komposition gelegt haben wird, - zwei Motive wie unser Enthauptungs- und Verführungsmotiv in derartig ungeschickter Weise verbunden haben kann, wie es in GOK der Fall ist? Können wir einem französischen höfischen Epiker des 13. Jahrhunderts die geradezu klägliche Motivierung des Gansen durch die Laune der Fee Morgan, diesen ganzen jämmerlichen Schluss zur Last legen?" (Ibid., p. 395.)
- 2) "Die Ergebnisse unserer gesamten letzten Untersuchungen über Golagros und Gawane, die Awntyrs off Arthure und die Avowyngs of King Arther sowie GOK lassen sich wohl dahin zusammenfassen, dass diese vier Artusromane sämtlich durch Eigenart und Schwäche der Komposition sowie Vernachlässigung des höfischen Elementes, - bzw. Wahl von höfischen Geistes völlig entgegengesetzten, ja direkt hehnsprechenden Motiven, - die drei letztgenannten Überdies übereinstimmend auch durch stark moralisierende Tendenz und auffällig schwere psychologische Mängel französischer Artusromantik unendlich fernstehen und daher sicher nicht auf französische Gesamtvorlagen zurückzuführen, vielmehr als typisch englische Dichtungen anzusehen sind! (Ibid., p. 436.)

Beheading Game, and agreed with Hulbert in deriving the Temptation from a Celtic legend concerning the love of a fée for a mortal. Whoever first combined the two incidents made the latter conform to the Test motif of the former, ⁽¹⁾ but, according to Löhmann, so clumsily that traces of its original significance are still apparent in the alliterative version, where the lady's behaviour towards Gawain indicates that her love for him is genuine, not merely a ruse to try him. ⁽²⁾ Convinced that such an inept compilation could not be the work of a French author, and that the original to which the alliterative poet refers could not have been in French, ⁽³⁾ he concluded that the immediate source of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was written in English and was the work of an English redactor.

These constitute the major theories so far advanced regarding the source of the alliterative Gawain. Other studies have sought to connect its origin with various individuals and chivalric orders. The adoption of Gawain's 'grene lace' by his fellows of the Round Table in the last stanza of the poem gave rise to the suggestion

(Cont.) 3) O. Löhmann, Die Sage von Gawain und dem Grünen Ritter, Königsberg, 1938.

- 1) "Er erkannte sofort den Bruch der Handlung in dem Gegensatz zwischen dem Liebesmotiv und dem Prüfungsmotiv als untragbar und beseitigte ihn, indem er ersteres unterdrückte und das zweite zum Grundgedanken des Ganzen machte" (Op.cit., p.34.)
- 2) Ibid., pp.47-8.
- 3) "Wenn der englische GOE-Dichter einleitend über seine Dichtung sagt 'I schal telle hit astit, as I in toun herde, wiþ tonge...! (V.31-32), so kann sich das kaum auf eine französische Quelle beziehen. Die Wahrscheinlichkeit spricht hier für eine englische Quelle. Das Französische war damals, am Ende des 14 Jahrhunderts, schon im Absterben begriffen, war auch nur die Sprache der Höfe und der Gebildeten, die Sprache des Volkes war englisch. 'I herde in toun' deutet doch wohl auf einen Vortrag vor der Volksmenge, also auf eine englische Version" (Ibid., p.32.)

that it was composed in honour of some order of knighthood.⁽¹⁾ The fact that the Garter motto is written at the end of the text in the extant manuscript has led to its association with the foundation of the order,⁽²⁾ but it has been suggested that a connection with the Knights of the Bath or the Savoy Order of the Collar is more probable.⁽³⁾ The issue is largely irrelevant here since it is merely suggested that the wish to celebrate a chivalric brotherhood may have provided the impetus for the composition, influenced the choice of story-matter and dictated the prominence given to the 'grene lace'. Those who have associated Sir Gawain with historical figures imply, however, that its plot was modelled on incidents in their careers. It has, for example, been suggested that the beheading of the Green Knight was based on the execution of Sir Ralph Holmes, to whom Froissart refers as the Green Squire,⁽⁴⁾ and, alternatively, that the poem as a whole arose from certain events in the life of Enguerrand de Coucy, a French knight who married Isabella, daughter of Edward III.⁽⁵⁾ But the evidence on which these identifications rest is extremely tenuous by comparison with the general basis for the discussion of the evolution of Sir Gawain from literary sources.

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- 1) See, Wells, Manual, p.57; M. Day, op.cit., p.132, Note; O. Löbmann, op.cit., p.34, Note.
 - 2) See, I. Jackson, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight considered as a 'Garter' Poem?" Anglia, XXXVII, pp.393-423, Halle, 1913; W.H. Schofield, English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, London, 1906, p.217; I. Gollancz in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1907, p.366; H.L. Savage, The Gawain-Poet, Chapel Hill, N. Carolina, 1956.
 - 3) See, J.R. Hulbert, loc.cit., pp.707-21.
 - 4) H. Braddy, "Sir Gawain and Ralph Holmes the Green Knight", Modern Language Notes, 67, pp.240-2, Baltimore, 1952.
 - 5) H.L. Savage, The Gawain-Poet, Chapel Hill, N. Carolina, 1956.

Of the theories properly concerned with the nature of these sources none has proved generally acceptable. Even the question of whether or not the original of the alliterative poem was a French work or an English one remains undecided. The views of Lohmann and Dr. von Schaubert in this connection stem from their conception of Sir Gawain as a clumsy compilation, flawed in structure and unworthy of a French romance-writer. Yet the overwhelming consensus of opinion is that, whether the credit belongs to the alliterative poet or to the author of an earlier version, the romance has been constructed with a skill rarely equalled in the literature of Medieval Europe.⁽¹⁾ Such judgements are essentially subjective, but the evidence adduced in support of an English original is not convincing. It has been shown that Lohmann's interpretation of the Temptation incident as an inadequate adaptation, confused in meaning, rested upon the misunderstanding of a number of lines from which he assumed that the lady's expressions of love were genuine and represented unintentional and inappropriate survivals from an earlier form of the story.⁽²⁾ Dr. von Schaubert's classification of Gawain with the Amours off Arthur and other poems which she regarded as typically English in structure, took no account of the obvious distinction between the skilful interweaving of narratives, structurally and thematically, in the former and the association of unrelated episodes

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- 1) "Whoever the genius was who worked out the plot of GCK, he performed a miracle, for I doubt whether in the whole history of fiction so perfect a narrative structure has been built almost exclusively from such inharmonious and recalcitrant materials? (R.S. Loomis, "More Celtic Elements in Gawain and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLII, pp. 149-84, Urbana, Ill., 1943, p. 183.
 - 2) See the review of his thesis by H.L. Savage in The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXVIII, pp. 445-50, Urbana, Ill., 1939, pp. 446-7.

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 in the latter. And, it might be added, the instance of Colagrus and Gawain, in which two separate incidents, taken from a French romance, have been given unity of form and meaning by an alliterative poet, argues against her thesis rather than in support of it. Even if one grants the premise on which it is based,—the invariable superiority of French literature,—it is difficult not to feel that the argument concerning the defects of the alliterative version is too strained to carry conviction.

Something of the same exaggeration marks the studies of Miss Weston, Professor Loomis and others who have approached the problem with the conviction that the ultimate origin of Arthurian romance is to be found in Celtic folklore. In so far as they have been able to discover convincing analogues to episodes in Sir Gawain and to reveal the original significance of its story-matter, their researches form a valid part of the source-study. But their thesis has, perhaps, been pressed too far. However impressive the evidence produced by individual folklorists, the cumulative effect fails to carry conviction. The accumulation of detailed parallels and the identification of analogues in various Welsh and Irish cycles implies an elaborate process of synthesis which is scarcely exemplified in the other Medieval versions, regarded as cognate developments of the Gawain-story. None of those who contributed to this imposing body of evidence considered its implications or the part played by such a synthesis in the production of the alliterative romance. They were content to bridge the gap between the

1) "One feels bound to protest here, in spite of Dr. von Schaubert's opinion, that the skilful interweaving of the stories in Gawain is of a very different type from that in the other three poems" (M. Day, op.cit., p. xxix, Note 1.)

rudimentary framework of the narrative in the legends of Cuchulinn, and the sophisticated version of Sir Gawain by producing feasible 'originals' for every episode and even for such incidentals as the emblem of the pentangle. Their success is not, however, so significant as it might appear at first sight: given any considerable body of story-matter, Celtic or other, and an equal licence in interpretation, it would not be difficult to assemble equally impressive parallels.⁽¹⁾ But the complicated train of hypotheses on which many of the correspondences depend, and the variant identifications proposed in some instances, have confused and weakened the general thesis. And conflicting interpretations of the mythological background of the story, particularly the nature of the Green Knight, have shown how subjective such judgements are and how unreliable as a guide to the significance which his source-matter held for the alliterative author. The realisation that such arguments had been carried further than the factual evidence warranted has recently led Professor Loomis, the most confident of the 'Celticists' to modify his original views.⁽²⁾ Though he continues to support the general

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- 1) It is significant that such parallels have been discovered in legends of the Vedic traditions: "...in Indian mythology and ritual are to be found, and in endless variety, the characteristic motives of the Western romances and fairy-tales of the Green Knight and Grail quest types. Stories and motives of other types could be paralleled in un-ending detail..." (A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Indra and Ramucsi", Speculum, XIX, pp. 104-25, Cambridge, Mass., 1944, p. 120.) There is no question here of a literary connection, but rather of the duplication of common folk-lore patterns, reflecting a universal mythological significance. "We have, in fact, to account for the world-wide distribution of folk-lore motives: and if we are to do that we must, I think, go behind the 'literature' and ask what the folk-lore motives mean, and why it is that it has seemed so important that they should be faithfully transmitted..." (Ibid., pp. 120-21.)
 - 2) R.S. Loomis, "Objections to the Celtic Origin of the 'Matière de Bretagne'", Rom., LXXIX, pp. 47-77, 1958.

thesis of the relationship between Celtic myth and Arthurian romance,⁽¹⁾ he now feels compelled to reject many of the detailed hypotheses on which it was built up as speculative and unproven, and, in particular, his own equation of Cuchulinn with the Welsh Garvan, and Garvan with Gawain, on which he had based his theory concerning the origin of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.⁽²⁾

From the Celtic analogues whose validity he has come to question Loomis specifically excepts the link between The Champion's Bargain and the Beheading Game in Arthurian romance, on which the theories of Kittredge and Hulbert were primarily founded.⁽³⁾ The features which establish its connection with Sir Gawain are impressive, and the majority of scholars accept the Irish legend as the ultimate source of the Challenge in the alliterative poem. None of the various episodes suggested as the origin of the Temptation command the same general acceptance. Other Arthurian tales in which Gawain is submitted to a similar test bear only a vague general resemblance to the incident in the English poem.⁽⁴⁾ The moral tales cited by Dr. von Schaubert, in

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- 1) "Though one may reject many Celtic parallels adduced by one scholar or another, there remains in my opinion so large a body of striking similarities between the narrative literature of Ireland and Wales on the one hand and the European romances of the Round Table on the other that the position stands secure" (Loc. cit., p. 77.)
 - 2) "...I involved myself in a network of speculations and equations which was bound to provoke amazement in those better grounded than myself in Celtic literature! "I have long since realized that not only is there insufficient evidence for these relationships, but also that Garvan and Gernach cannot mean what I thought" (Ibid., p. 48.)
 - 3) "If anyone, after reading Kittredge's study, denies that there is convincing evidence that Arthurian romance was influenced by Irish sagas, then it is obvious that literary parallels have no validity for him" (Ibid., p. 67.)
 - 4) "Though these stories show the existence of some tale of Sir Gawain tested by his host through his wife, none of them exhibit the close connection with our poem that can be seen between it and Caradoc

which the hero is a hermit, have no association with the world of romance and their circumstantial resemblance to the Gawain incident is not so compelling as to postulate a direct literary connection. Hulbert's conception of the Temptation as an integral part of the Celtic legend from which, he believed, Sir Gawain was ultimately derived, is largely subjective, depending, like much of Loomis's thesis, on a personal interpretation of the original meaning of the story. Just as Loomis saw in the alliterative poem reflections of the primeval struggle between Curol and Cuchulinn for the possession of Blathnat, so Hulbert detected echoes of a Fairy-mistress story in those romance versions of the Beheading Game regarded as cognate with it. But the objective evidence in both instances has not proved convincing to others. Kittredge's thesis of derivation from a French romance in which both motifs were already united rests upon an elaborate chain of assumptions for which there is little factual support.⁽¹⁾ The evidence which he cited for the existence of its hypothetical antecedents links them only with the Beheading Game in Fled Briorend. His identification of analogues to the Temptation incident depended upon his interpretation of it as a test resulting in a release from enchantment, yet nothing

(Cont.) or even Fled Briorend, where actions and speeches can be found almost identical with those in Gawain. In none is any detail of the temptation found which reminds us of the methods of Bertilak's lady. It seems unnecessary to assume any more knowledge of such versions on the part of the compiler of the stories than the fact, which must have been generally current, that Gawain had taken part in some such adventure? (M. Day, op. cit., pp. xxv-xxvi.)

- 1) "Beyond the suggestion of The Turk and Gawain as derived from the French original, Kittredge puts forward no argument for its existence, beyond saying that it is 'altogether probable', and that the Englishman was 'certainly indebted to his unknown predecessor for the plot as a whole'." (Ibid., p. xxxi.)

in Sir Gawain suggests that the hero's resistance to temptation has this effect, and there is little objective basis for Kittredge's theory.

From the academic view-point all the attempts which have been made to trace the origin and evolution of the Gawain narrative have some validity, and each has contributed to our knowledge of its prehistory, both literary and legendary. But so far as critical appreciation of the poem, or understanding of the creative process by which it was produced, are concerned, the source-study has produced little of essential value. Research has not so far determined the nature of the source with sufficient certainty to enable us to evaluate the English poem either as the creation of an original artist or as a redaction based on the work of others. Even if we grant all the hypotheses which have been advanced in this connection, the essential knowledge still eludes us. If we accept the views of Kittredge or Hulbert on the origin of the story-matter and study the versions which they regarded as its nearest analogues, we find them so different in form and nature, so inferior in literary quality, so remote even in narrative outline from the alliterative poem, as to furnish no concrete conception of the postulated source, to which, admittedly, they are only indirectly related. At the best these theories can indicate feasible forms of the story, or its components, at a certain stage in its evolution, but cannot establish their relationship to the English version with sufficient assurance to allow us to estimate the author's ability in narrative construction. And without more immediate knowledge of the source it is equally impossible to judge the alliterative poet's interpretation of his material. The chief value of research upon the interrelations of Celtic legend and Arthurian romance is the

light which it throws upon the mythical significance of the story-matter, and, therefore, upon the methods by which it has been made to conform to the ethical codes and social interests of a Medieval audience. But few Celtic scholars would suggest that the alliterative author drew directly upon Celtic material in its primitive, folklore form, and their theories do little to bridge the gap between Fled Briorend and the English romance. Even if we accept a particular interpretation as most in keeping with the meaning given to the story in Sir Gawain we still cannot determine what part the English author may have played in reinterpreting it, or to what extent its rationalisation was the work of his predecessors, French or other.

The whole question of the origin of Sir Gawain has been discussed as though it were merely a matter of the dependence of English romance upon French originals. But even if one rejects a French source in favour of the theory advanced by Lohmann and Dr. von Schaubert nothing of value is added to our knowledge of the process by which the alliterative work was produced. The assumption of an English original merely poses the same questions at another remove: what were its sources?; what was the redactive process involved?; what evidence does it furnish of creative ability on the part of an English author, or of literary discrimination in an English audience?; without supplying any means of answering such queries. And similarly, the association of the poem with a historical figure or with a chivalric order, even if it could be proved conclusively, has little significance since we cannot know how or to what extent it influenced the choice, invention or adaptation of the story-matter. Even the most reliable of the source-studies, can, therefore, be of limited value only. They

can do something to define the category of literature to which Sir Gawain is related and trace the evolution of its story-matter in cognate versions. But the light which this throws upon the origin and composition of the alliterative romance is so feeble and oblique as to provide only limited guidance in formulating a critical appreciation of the work or judging the creative ability of the English poet.

And, in effect, critical appreciation of Sir Gawain has either been confined to comment on the intrinsic qualities of the poem, excluding all consideration of the creative process, or has supplemented the evidence of the source-studies by reference to the general tradition of the Middle English romance. In so far as received opinion on the relation of such romances to their antecedents can be said to exist, it conforms in general outline to the pattern assumed by most of those who have studied the origins of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. That is to say, it postulates derivation from a French romance, which, if it belonged to the Arthurian tradition, was ultimately based upon a Celtic legend, for whose rationalisation and adaptation to Medieval tastes, a succession of intermediate French authors had been responsible. This, broadly speaking, is the process of evolution which experience has detected behind the majority of Arthurian romances in Middle English, and the extent to which Kittredge's research tended to confirm it in the case of Sir Gawain no doubt accounts for the readiness with which his theories were accepted by those who had not personally studied the problem.⁽¹⁾ But however valuable such corroborative evidence may be in the general study of the Middle English romance;

1) They were accepted by Tolkien and Gordon (*op.cit.*, pp.xi-xv), for example, to the virtual exclusion of other opinions.

it is largely worthless, not to say misleading, as a basis for evaluating the alliterative Gawain as the creation, original or derivative, of an English poet. The specific importance of Sir Gawain in the literary history of the Middle Ages lies in the extent to which it differs from the characteristic romances produced at the same period in both France and England. The qualities which distinguish Gawain from other romances cannot, with assurance, be accounted for by reference to the tradition which produced works so different from it in every respect. It is as unjustified to assume that the features which differentiate it from the common run of Middle English romances must have been inherited from a French prototype as to attribute its flaws to the clumsiness of an English redactor. Since the various source-studies, whatever their individual virtues, cannot furnish any reliable indication as to the nature of its immediate original, and the unique character of the romance largely invalidates the evidence of the tradition in this connection, the most that can be attempted is a tentative judgement of the creative process on the basis of the cognate versions, with cautious reference to the general practice of Medieval romance-writers, both French and English.

The source-studies have thrown more light on the general construction of the poem than on any other aspect, but even here their value is limited. Nor can the romance tradition be called in evidence, since commentators are agreed that structurally Gawain is unique, in the limitation of its scope to a single adventure of the hero⁽¹⁾, in the

1) "The originality is in the way of telling. Instead of reviewing many of Gawain's adventures, the story is confined to one; and even within this single adventure, that our interest may be centered upon the victory of chivalry over base selfish gratification, all minor episodes are passed over swiftly" (C. S. Baldwin, An Introduction to English Medieval Literature, New York, 1914, p. 155.)

relation of its incidents to a common theme,⁽¹⁾ and in the skilful interweaving of the two main incidents.⁽²⁾ Whether the alliterative poet was personally responsible for the limitation of the romance, or whether he found this incident in Gawain's career already isolated in his source, is impossible to determine. The evidence of the cognate versions, most of which form part of larger compilations, and the example of the romance tradition in which the complex of adventures is the norm, may suggest, however, that here, as in Golagrus and Gawain, an alliterative poet may deliberately have chosen to concentrate upon a limited episode, separating it from its original context. If so, we may assume that the results of such concentration, the heightened significance of the chosen incident, the elaboration of incidental details, etc., were part of his intended effect in the conduct of the redaction. Whether he found the plot as a unified whole, ready to his hand, or chose to combine incidents drawn from different sources, is equally impossible to tell. Despite the conclusions of Kittredge and Hulbert,--based on very different premises--, that the Challenge and Temptation motifs had previously been associated in the work of a French romance-writer, such a unified version remains purely hypothetical. The poet's references to "þe bok"

1) "It is no simple tale of adventure and love, but the story of a test of character for which adventure and love-making provide the means. This in itself would give the poem a unity uncommon in romances, but, in addition, the poet concentrates on one adventure of his hero, avoiding the temptation to dwell on others, though he mentions them" (D. Everett, Essays on Middle English Literature, (ed. P. Kean), Oxford, 1955, p. 75.)

2) "The theme of the Beheading Game is kept in the reader's consciousness throughout, even when the second theme of the Temptation occupies the foreground" (Ibid., p. 83.)

need not be taken at their face value,⁽¹⁾ or may apply at most to a partial source. If we accept the evidence of the group of alliterative poems usually attributed to him, he was widely read in contemporary romance and moral treatises, and, on one occasion at least, combined material from diverse sources in an original, well-knit composition.⁽²⁾

But though this may suggest that the author of Sir Gawain was capable of evolving his plot from various components, ~~but~~ we cannot pretend to judge his constructional ability in this instance without more precise knowledge of his sources than we possess at present.⁽³⁾ The shaping of the plot involved much more than the bringing together of the Beheading Game and the Temptation. The thematic as well as the structural unity of the poem results from their skilful interweaving, the outcome of one episode depending upon the issue of the other, and the two being knit together by the Exchange of Winnings

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- 1) "He says in ll.689-90 that 'the book' tells him of Gawain's wild journey to the Green Knight's castle, but it is just that description, with its geographical knowledge of the North-West Midlands and its realistic wintry landscape, which is obviously due to the West Midland poet himself. This makes the existence of 'the book' dubious" (M. Day, op.cit., p. xxvi.)
 - 2) "From Cleanness we know that he had read the Roman de la Rose, Mandeville's Travels (in the French version), Cursor Mundi and The Knight of La Tour-Landry (probably in French). In a complicated plot, comprising three episodes skilfully united by links, he blended these sources with the stories he took from various books of the Bible. At the end he states that he has preached the same moral lesson in three different ways.... It is not unnatural to suppose, in default of other evidence, that he went on to combine more elaborately two stories which had finally the same moral. Hence there is no reason why we should assume that he used one source only" (Ibid., pp. xxxi-xxxii.)
 - 3) The subjective nature of such judgements is demonstrated by the fact that it was specifically on the evidence of his other compositions that Loomis denied the English poet any part in the shaping of Sir Gawain: "For this triumph in narrative architecture we cannot give any credit to the English poet. At least nothing in his other work suggests any such power" (R.S. Loomis, "More Celtic Elements in Gawain and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLII, pp. 149-84, Urbana, Ill., 1943, p. 184.)

and the device of the green lace. Some scholars are prepared to accept such features as late additions on the part of the English author;⁽¹⁾ But they have more than incidental significance: a redactor capable of employing devices of the kind with such subtlety would have been equally capable of constructing the whole framework of the romance. Opinions as to the point at which they became part of the composition must depend upon the solution of the wider problem of origin and evolution, where no absolute decision is possible.

Other, more refined aspects of construction present an even greater problem. Critics are agreed that the unique unity of Sir Gawain depends to a large extent upon the way in which every feature of the narrative, even the most incidental detail, is related to the whole, controlled and ordered with a delicate sense^{of} proportion, contributing to the structure without distorting the general development of the design.⁽²⁾ In this connection the source-studies can give no valid guidance: without access to the immediate original we cannot tell whether the subordinate details were related to the general structure with equal skill or whether this represents a contribution on the part of the English poet. The evidence of the tradition would suggest the latter: architectonics were not the strong point of Medieval literature,

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- 1) "...he increased Gawain's obligations, and made the test more clear-cut by adding the device of the exchange of winnings and the daily settlement with the husband, which he probably derived from a popular tale similar to the Miles Gloriosus? (J.R. Hulbert, loc. cit., p. 701.) See also, M. Day, op. cit., p. xiv.
 "At all events, his/Gawain's/possession of the lace in Gawain and the Green Knight is not an old feature of his legend..." "And it is even possible that the lace did not enter the plot until the English author worked up the material? (G.L. Kittredge, op. cit., p. 140.)
 - 2) "With all the wealth of detail that is to be found in every part of the poem, there is never any lack of control. On the contrary, the poet has succeeded in fashioning a narrative not merely unified but cunningly and satisfyingly shaped" (D. Everett, op. cit., p. 83.)

and we cannot confidently attribute to a hypothetical prototype a highly-developed sense of proportion which we do not find elsewhere in the romances either French or English.⁽¹⁾ To a large extent this is true also of another distinctive feature in the structure of the poem. Certain incidents and descriptive passages are so placed in relation to each other,—the three hunts which correspond to the three interviews between Gawain and the lady; the association of the Troy legend with Arthur's court which opens and closes the poem; the festivities which precede the appearance of the Green Knight and follow the arrival of Gawain at the castle of Bertilak; etc.,—as to produce a rhetorical pattern superimposed upon the narrative structure.⁽²⁾ Some of these parallelisms may have been implicit in the narrative as the alliterative poet inherited it, but others are so incidental as to imply invention or the most slavish reproduction of an original. And the rareness of this sort of ornament in Medieval romance forbids the automatic assumption that it must have originated in the source.

(Cont.) ¶...the author, even where he compresses, does not lapse into bare summary. Indeed, the merit of this story is not swiftness of action, but richness and fulness of description within the field on which our attention is fixed. The interest is held, not by the excitement of activity but by the very vividness of the situation! (C.S. Baldwin, op.cit., p.157.)

- 1) C.S. Lewis (The Allegory of Love, London, 1936, pp.141-2) commenting on this feature of Medieval art in general, specifically excerpts Sir Gawain: "It failed of unity because it attempted vast designs with inadequate resources. When the design was modest—as in Gawain and the Green Knight or in some Norman parish churches— or when the resources were adequate—as in Salisbury Cathedral and the Divine Comedy— then Medieval art attains a unity of the highest order, because it embraces the greatest diversity of subordinated detail!"
- 2) "The poet has produced, as it were, an internal and an external order at the same time. While the character and actions of the hero give coherence and meaning to the events of the story, making of these a unified narrative, the events are also so ordered as to produce something of the effect of a pattern. This 'patterning' is made by the parallelism of incident or description? This sort of effect has

In general, therefore, though our limited knowledge of its antecedents prevents us from dogmatizing about the structural evolution of Sir Gawain, the evidence of romance tradition alone makes it probable that the alliterative poet was more than a passive redactor, content to adopt the framework of an earlier creation. The very perfection of the construction, its unity, controlled proportions and balanced components, and the subtlety with which the narrative and rhetorical patterns are integrated, suggest that it is the product, at first hand, of an exceptionally skilled narrator, or, alternatively, that it is a copy of such a creation, made by a painstaking redactor conscious of every structural virtue in his original. The romance as we have it can scarcely be viewed as the accretion of successive story-tellers: it bears the stamp of a single creative intelligence of a high order. Whether this was the English poet or a predecessor whose work he inherited cannot be proven. But even if we assume that Sir Gawain is entirely unoriginal, it nonetheless represents a considerable achievement on the part of an alliterative author. The delicate balance and subtle patterning of the romance could not have been reproduced in all their perfection by a careless or insensitive redactor. Even on the hypothesis that the alliterative version is no more than a translation, the recognition of qualities of form and structure and their preservation for the enjoyment of an English audience indicates an author more aware of artistic values in such matters than the majority of his contemporaries, French and English alike. And, as we shall see, other

(Cont.) its nearest analogy in music and can give the same kind of pleasure as variations on a musical theme. It is undoubtedly an outcome of rhetorical teaching, but it is rare to find among Middle English poets one who knows how to make organic use of this teaching" (D. Everett, op.cit., pp. 83-4.)

features of Sir Gawain make it highly unlikely that the alliterative version is merely a literal transcription, whatever its source may have been.

Of these perhaps the most significant is connected with the motivation of the romance. Most critics have found the motive given for the action as a whole,—the desire of Morgan la Fay to terrify Guinevere and shame the company of the Round Table,—inadequate and unconvincing. ⁽¹⁾ Who was responsible for this flaw? ⁽²⁾ Morgan does not figure in any of the analogues to either the Challenge or the Temptation, and it has been suggested that it was only at a late stage in its evolution that the whole adventure was attributed to her traditional enmity towards the Round Table. Kittredge believed that the

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- 1) "...the motive in question is not well worked into the fabric of the story. Not only is the Fay's trick a failure, but there is no indication, in our author's own description of the scene at court, that Guinevere showed any particular alarm: certainly she was in no danger of death from shock. Besides, one is rather surprised that Gawain should part with Bernlak on such cordial terms after the blunt avowal of his evil errand? (G.L.Kittredge, op.cit., p.132.) "...by it Gawain gains only greater glory, and Arthur's court a better reputation. Being an enchantress, she of course knew what would be the outcome of her scheme. Why should she then plan a test which Gawain could meet? Further, if she was inspired by enmity, why was she so just in carrying out the tests? What was her motive? What could she gain by this test? The explanation is one that seems to be sensible superficially but is inherently unreasonable? (J.R.Hulbert, loc.cit., p.454.)
 - 2) It has been suggested (D.S.Baughan, "The Role of Morgan la Fay in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," E.L.H.: A Journal of English Literary History, 17, Baltimore, 1950, pp.241-51.) that the supposition of a flaw is due to misinterpretation of the romance, that Morgan's desire to humiliate Arthur and his company is an adequate motive, and, furthermore, that her plan succeeds! This interpretation turns upon the meaning of ll.330-8 in which, it is suggested, Arthur actually strikes at the Green Knight with the axe, fails to harm him and is shamed before his followers until Gawain in turn takes up the challenge. The passage is admittedly vague: "...through respect for the divinity that hedges a king.....the poet gave to the account something of Morgan's magic so that it seems almost as if Arthur did not strike! But even if the lines in question

English redactor introduced her role as a substitute for the motive of disenchantment which, according to his theory, was at the core of the hypothetical French Gawain,⁽¹⁾ while Hulbert regarded it as a late replacement for what he considered the original cause of the adventure, the desire of a fee to test her chosen lover.⁽²⁾ Since there is no agreement as to what was the original motive it cannot be proven that the English version represents an alteration in this respect, still less that the alliterative poet was responsible for it. But the suggestion is an interesting one. If the inadequate motivation of the English romance is due to the redactor's dissatisfaction with this aspect of his original it shows that, far from being a mere translator, passive in his acceptance of everything which the source contained, he was prepared to undertake fundamental alterations. And it is, perhaps, more feasible that a defect of this kind should result from an attempt to carry out a large-scale rearrangement and reinterpretation of the story-matter, than that a redactor who, in other matters, has shown such taste and discernment, should perpetuate such a flaw in the original. But, on the other hand, we are not intitled to take it for granted that unsatisfactory features must inevitably have originated with the English author. And if this particular idea derived from his source

(Cont.) could bear this construction it is surely unthinkable that such a skilful narrator as the Gawain-poet would pass over a major crisis in the action so unemphatically, without making its outcome specific and underlining the momentous significance of Arthur's failure.

1) "In the French Gawain the moving cause of the whole plot.... was Bernlak's desire to be disenchantred, a motive retained from the temptation story." But if Morgan was to be the wonder-worker in the mysterious background, - if it was to be Morgan that sent Bernlak to the court in strange guise with his axe in his hand, - the subject of the visit could no longer be his disenchantment. That purpose had to disappear when she became herself the weaver of the spell. Another reason had to be imagined, and our author found it in Morgan's enmity toward the queen, which, indeed, was in his mind an inseparable trait of her traditional character" (Op.cit., p.133.)

2) Loc.cit., pp.458-60.

he may well have considered it perfectly satisfactory. The evidence of the tradition shows that the authors of romance paid little attention to motivation, that both they and their audiences were primarily interested in adventure and were prepared to accept it on the flimsiest of pretexts.⁽¹⁾ In the case of Sir Gawain there are indications that the author was so preoccupied with the moral implications of his narrative as to accept any motive which did not detract from this aspect of the romance.

It is generally agreed that this preoccupation with the meaning of events is at the core of the alliterative Gawain: "The first concern of the poem is thus with conduct; that is it is moral in the true sense of the word."⁽²⁾ No one doubts that the moral theme of the romance is the proving of Sir Gawain, but there has been some disagreement as to what are the qualities for which he is tested.⁽³⁾ Most critics, however, regard the poem, not as a series of incidents artificially contrived to display particular moral qualities, but as a narrative unified by its concern with the character of a perfect knight in all its aspects of courage, chastity, loyalty and courtesy. Whatever the ultimate source of the Challenge and the Temptation episodes, the conception of a test must have been associated with them from the beginning, but the existing analogues are primarily concerned with the practical outcome of the trial, - the winning of a Fairy-mistress or the disenchantment of the tester, according to the various interpretations, and not

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- 1) Within the terms of romance convention, Tolkien and Gordon (op.cit., pp. x-xi) find the motivation of Sir Gawain quite acceptable.
 - 2) D. Everett, op.cit., p. 77.
 - 3) Hulbert (loc.cit., pp. 694-5) interpreted the episode of Gawain and the lady as a test, not for chastity as others believed, but for loyalty towards his host. "But ll. 1773-5 show that Gawain's chief fear is that he may sin against God, and his duty of loyalty to his host takes the second place" (H. Day, op.cit., p. 221, Note 1.)

with its bearing upon the character of the hero. The source-studies cannot tell us who first conceived the narrative as a unity based upon character and related the component episodes to a moral pattern more compelling than the narrative pattern created by intertwining them. The other works attributed to the Gawain-poet have been cited as evidence of his preoccupation with moral themes, and it has been suggested that his personal selection and combination of the material is responsible for the fact that Sir Gawain is predominantly concerned with character rather than with adventure for its own sake.⁽¹⁾ This, if it could be proven, would suggest that the alliterative author exercised a creative control more profound than that indicated by the various theories of narrative manipulation. The common practice of romance-writers in using their narratives to expound various aspects of the chivalric code makes it possible that the English poet inhabited the moral theme along with the matter of his romance. Yet its treatment surpasses conventional usage: the concentration upon fundamental moral qualities rather than the purely social attributes of knight-hood, their relation to a Christian basis not merely to the code of

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- 1) It was on this basis that Dr. Mable Day (op.cit., pp. xxxi-xxxvii) attributed the union of the Challenge and the Temptation to the alliterative poet. "Each story illustrates the same moral obligation: a promise once given must be kept, even though unforeseen circumstances appear to make death the cost of keeping it. This brings the plot of Gawain into line with those of Cleanness, Patience, and also St. Erkenwald, each of which illustrates a moral virtue, the first two by showing God's punishment of the opposite vice, the last by exhibiting the character of a man who, in the face of many temptations, kept to the path of perfect justice! (Op.cit., p. xxi)" "It seems quite consonant with the methods of the author of Cleanness and, as I hold, of St. Erkenwald, to take a story and with the help of hints from various sources mould it so that it shall be the vehicle of a great moral lesson! (Ibid., p. xxiv.)

chivalry, and the practical demonstration of such qualities in the action of the romance, without intrusive comment by the narrator,⁽¹⁾ suggests the reflection at first hand of a personal conception of the moral element rather than passive reproduction of an original or unthinking adherence to a convention.⁽²⁾ This originality of conception, freshness of treatment, and fundamental relation to the whole fabric of the romance, makes the moral content of Sir Gawain one of its most unusual features,⁽³⁾ and there is some reason to think that it may be the creation of the alliterative author, the reflection of a personal interest on his part.

The demonstration of chivalric virtues by submitting an individual knight to a series of trials is a familiar pattern in Medieval romance: the uniqueness of Sir Gawain consists in the transformation of the convention by the originality and imaginative intensity with which it is handled. The character-drawing in the alliterative

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- 1) "Clearly, the poet has made his own choice among the qualities customarily held to be proper to a knight, and his choice accords with Christian morality? The moral as the poem is, the poet rarely moralizes. His conception of the Christian gentleman is conveyed through the actions and speeches of the characters and, in particular, of Gawain. At the same time none of the characters is a bare peg on which to hang a moral, like Chaucer's Canterbury? (D. Everett, op.cit., p.77.)
 - 2) There is an obvious contrast between the treatment of this element in Gawain and the artificial and mechanical exposition of social and religious codes in the French prose romances of the Grail, with their contrived situations illustrating esoteric aspects of the codes, their overweighted symbolism and intrusive commentaries upon it.
 - 3) It is an interesting indication of the subjective nature of such judgements that Dr. Day's conception of the moral element as of fundamental importance in Sir Gawain has been countered by another scholar. "In Sir Gawain the success comes principally from the poet's remarkable visualisation of the action and setting of his story, and only to a lesser extent from the conceptions of conduct upon which the characters act. These are, to be sure, noble and gracious enough, and reflect a good knowledge of human behaviour, but beyond the

it is the human flesh which has been given to them that constitutes true characterization. It consists in a multitude of details, actions, gestures, forms of expression, so grouped and interrelated as to build up an integrated personality. If these are the work of the alliterative poet, then whatever the form of his source may have been, the characters may be considered as of his creation. And to suppose that they are not implies the preservation of the most minute circumstances in copying from an original in which the characterization was already fully developed, a process, which, as we shall see, the nature of the alliterative medium renders unlikely.

The convincing realism with which the characters are presented has a significant bearing upon the supernatural element in the English romance. The Green Knight is no less vividly characterised than the human actors, and by the same method of accumulating intimate details of speech and behaviour. At the same time there is no attempt to gloss over his magic nature. Indeed, by applying the same intensive realism to his strange appearance and the grotesque circumstances of his beheading the alliterative poem leaves no doubt of his supernatural associations. Yet the role he plays is accepted without comment, and, indeed, throughout the romance, the element of magic is not differentiated in treatment from the concrete world in which it operates, but is presented as something no more in need of explanation than the social usages reflected in the story. "The author might almost have been a modern novelist with a contempt for romance, trying, by way of experiment

(Cont.) it: he made it no longer a knight and a lady, but persons that sometimes seem to us, even in their long-forgotten setting, almost real" (C.S. Baldwin, op.cit., p.161.)

to work out a 'supernatural' plot with the full strength of his reason; merely accepting the fabulous story, and trying how it will go with accessories from real life, and with modern manners and conversation.⁽¹⁾ To what extent was the alliterative author responsible for this method of bringing the supernatural element into accord with the realistic setting in which it operates? The earlier versions of the Beheading Game can suggest something of the way in which the prototype of the Green Knight was originally presented. But apart from a few recurrent features,—the giant size of the challenger, his terrible weapon, and his association with the colour green,—they differ too widely from each other and from Gawayne to allow us to distinguish what the alliterative author may have found in his source from his own imaginative contribution. Even if we accept Halbert's theory of the Green Knight's relationship to the lady of the Temptation we cannot tell whether the vagueness of his connection with Morgan la Fay is due to a deliberate policy on the part of the English poet of ignoring the supernatural springs of the action in favour of the realistic operation of the magic agent, or to a lack of clarity in his source. The various interpretations of the Green Knight as a Sun god, a vegetation spirit, or a god of Death, the identification of the Green Chapel as a burial mound,⁽²⁾ of the 'grene lace' as a Celtic talisman, have little value since there is no means of knowing whether the

1) W.F.Ker, English Literature: Medieval, London, 1912, p.139.

2) For this suggestion see B.Colgrave, "Sir Gawayne's Green Chapel", Antiquity, XII, 1938, pp.351-3.

English author was aware of this background to his material or to what extent rationalisation had blurred its significance before it came into his hands.

Whether or not the poet was conscious of its original meaning, the treatment of the supernatural in Sir Gawain is so consistent as to reflect a clear-cut conception of its function in the romance. The description of the Green Chapel as a natural structure whose atmosphere makes it a place of ill-omen, whose grass-grown walls automatically associate it with the Green Knight, conjures up a setting entirely appropriate to that mysterious figure, by concentrating on certain details of its physical appearance and their effect upon the mind of Gawain. And similarly, at the introduction of the Green Knight, the whole effect of his weird appearance, his supernatural associations, and the concealed threat in his challenge, is suggested by reiterated reference, in perfectly naturalistic terms, to his greenness, and by describing the reaction of the onlookers. There can be little doubt that the essential detail here, the Green Knight's colouring, derived from the Celtic versions of the Beheading Game, but whether the alliterative poet was aware of the significance it had there, whether for him green was a fairy colour or a colour associated with Death, is largely irrelevant. For us, who can only guess at the original significance, the description remains powerfully effective because it has been achieved by artistic means which remain valid: by applying to the supernatural the same vivid, concrete description, the same intense visualization by which the natural world is presented, and which makes it possible to accept the two upon the same plane of reality, yet without in any way depriving the magic element of its force or significance.

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 in the plot. The evidence of the tradition suggests that this method of treating the supernatural may be an original contribution on the part of the alliterative poet. The majority of romance-writers show the same reluctance to examine the operation of the magic forces which control the action in their narratives, but few of them make any attempt to assimilate the supernatural element to the realistic world of contemporary society in which their characters move. It is accepted as a necessary part of the plot machinery, but, in their hands, it remains a purely formal, conventional element, ignored as far as possible, and without any effort being made to give it the effectiveness which it has in Cawain. The method by which it is presented there involves the consistent use of a great deal of descriptive detail, carefully related to a common design, so that, even if this exploitation of the supernatural originated in his source, the alliterative poet can be credited with recognising its effectiveness and preserving it by a painstaking reproduction of the numerous detailed touches in which it consists. In this, therefore, as in other aspects of the work, a final estimate of the English author's contribution must depend upon the extent to which such a process of detailed reproduction is thought possible in an alliterative medium.

The successful harmonisation of the realistic and the supernatural in Sir Cawain is due in large part to the descriptive skill

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- 1) "The visual quality of Sir Cawain is of crucial importance to the necessary harmonization of two elements in its story, the everyday, human and dramatic one, and the formal, conventional one of magic! "By hiding the necessary but embarrassingly improbable cause behind the vividly and pictorially perceptible and therefore credible effect, the author won acceptance for his material, satisfied his own acute sense of the probable and to a large extent smoothed over the inevitable discrepancies between old conventional motifs and the naturalistic and human treatment of the subject which he preferred" (J. Kane, op.cit., pp. 74-5.)

lavished upon it. Indeed, the element of description is of the greatest importance throughout the poem as a whole. The plot is as improbable as that of most Medieval romances and the characters are not potentially more credible than such stereotyped figures usually are. The improbabilities are made acceptable by the circumstantial account given of them, every scene being filled out with incidental, pictorial details which lend it conviction, and the characters acquire depth and individuality by the vividness with which they are realized. The effect is achieved not by the mere accumulation of circumstantial detail, but by the skill and perception with which the poet has selected those features of character or incident which are most characteristic and evoke the personality or situation most vividly, without delaying the action or overloading the imagination with excessive description of particulars. "...he seems to outline every action or object clearly and to endow each picture, as it strikes the mind's eye, with a special distinctness, so that the effect of all is extremely vivid. In consequence the mind is not readily wearied in reading this romance; the clarity of succeeding impressions seems to refresh the reader instead of exhausting his straining imagination as do the diffuse and ill-defined impressions created in some other romances⁽¹⁾ In many passages the poet appears, at first sight, to have indulged a personal interest in the picturesque and exploited his descriptive talent purely for its own sake. But each of these descriptions contributes something essential to the plan of the romance: in the arming of Gawain

1) G.Kane, op.cit., p.74.

elaboration of the richness of his accoutrements emphasises the rank and worth of the knight as he is about to set out on his adventure; the description of the pentangle allows the poet to expound the hero's virtues just as these are about to be put to the test; the account of Gawain's winter journey carries the action forward and, at the same time, establishes the theme of his endurance under hardship. Yet, though there is little in the alliterative romance which can be considered superfluous, it is obvious that the poet took pleasure in descriptive writing for its own sake, most clearly in the hunting scenes, though even these have practical and thematic importance in the scheme of the poem.⁽¹⁾

The part played by the descriptive element in the success of the romance as a whole, makes it as important to know to what extent the English poet was responsible for its present form as to decide his part in shaping the plot or determining the characterisation. So far as the descriptive set-pieces are concerned, most scholars are prepared to consider them as original additions on his part. "Among the characteristic passages which were certainly added or greatly elaborated by the English author are:- the learned introductory stanza

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- 1) It has been suggested that the hunting scenes also have a symbolic relationship to the theme of the romance. H.L. Savage ("The Significance of the Hunting Scenes in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLVII, Urbana, Ill., 1928, pp.1-15) saw a closer connection between the hunts and Gawain's interviews with the lady than is generally proposed: "...a certain parallelism in their situations which would probably be quite apparent to the lady or gentleman of the fourteenth century" (Loc. cit., p.1). According to his theory there is a deliberate parallelism between Gawain's behaviour and the qualities attributed in Medieval venery to the various animals hunted by Sir Bercilak. On the first two days he hunts deer and boar, regarded as noble game, and Gawain preserves his honour in the face of temptation, while on the third day he hunts the fox, regarded as vermin, and Gawain proves false to his knightly word by breaking the compact between them.

summarizing the fabulous settlements of Western Europe and mentioning the Siege of Troy....; the description of the Christmas festivities and that of the Green Knight; the challenge and the speech of Gawain; the highly poetical stanzas on the changing seasons; the very elaborate description of the process of arming a knight, with the allegorical account of the pentangle of virtues; Gawain's itinerary....; the winter piece; the justly celebrated account of the three hunts.⁽¹⁾

The basis on which these passages are attributed to the alliterative author is not one which can be established by the evidence of the source-studies. Even if Loomis was correct in identifying the Celtic origin of the pentangle,⁽²⁾ and Hulbert in suggesting that details of the social setting were drawn from the Vulgate cycle of Arthurian romances,⁽³⁾ the contribution of the alliterative poet remains undefined, since the importance of these features consists in the use which has been made of them, the way in which they have been developed and functionally related to the plan of the romance. Our knowledge of the literary antecedents of Sir Gawain is too vague either to prove or disprove that these descriptive 'set-pieces' derived from an earlier version. The evidence of the tradition is equally inconclusive. Passages of the kind, elaborating details of dress, armour, and heraldic

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- 1) G.L.Kittredge, op.cit., pp.129-30. Tolkien and Gordon (op.cit., p.xvi) give a similar list of passages "which, in addition to being unparalleled in the existing French versions, are specially characteristic of the English poet and may almost certainly be taken as new matter introduced by him".
 - 2) R.S.Loomis, "More Celtic Elements in Gawain and the Green Knight", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLII, pp.149-84, Urbana, Ill., 1943, pp.167-9.
 - 3) J.R.Hulbert, "The Name of the Green Knight", The Early Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature, pp.12-19, Chicago, 1923, pp.16-19.

bearings, of feasts and travels, much of scenery and weather, are common in both French and English romances, but they are, for the most part, conventional and artificial, literary exercises in which the same stereotyped catalogues of detail are duplicated from one example to the next, where dress is always incredibly splendid, the weather invariably fair, and which have no essential bearing on the narrative theme and do nothing to further it. The contrasting treatment of the pictorial element in Gawayn, where it is closely integrated in the general structure of the romance, where the richness of feasts is elaborated, not for its own sake, but to establish or contrast a mood, in which the realistic description of bitter winter weather heightens the general realism and, at the same time, creates an atmosphere appropriate both to the action and to the moral theme it illustrates, may suggest that the alliterative author was an innovator in this respect, but it cannot rule out the possibility that this originality of conception was not his but was inherited from his source. The principal reason for supposing that the English poet was primarily responsible for the treatment of the descriptive element is not the inconclusive evidence of the analogues or the contrast with romance tradition, but the nature of the medium in which he worked. Even those who believe that Sir Gawayn was directly based upon a French original admit that the redactor's choice of an alliterative verse-form must have involved radical alteration of the parent version. In Kittredge's opinion, for example: "The Middle English masterpiece is not a translation in any proper sense of the term. It must be utterly different in style and poetic manner from the lost French poem on which it is based, for in these particulars it bears no resemblance to anything in French

literature. It marks the culmination of a development of style and poetic manner that is peculiar to England and to a certain part of England (the West Midland and Northern district), just as it marks the culmination of a kind of metrical development similarly limited in geographical scope⁽¹⁾

This is not to suggest that the use of an alliterative verse-form made it impossible for the English poet to reproduce a French original consistently and faithfully. But the choice of a medium so foreign to the dominant French tradition in romance implies an independence of approach which makes strict adherence to a product of that tradition somewhat improbable. The difficulties of alliterative verse, even in the relatively plastic and undemanding 'blank verse' paragraphs with rhyming 'bob and wheel' in which Gawain is written, are sufficient, however, to constitute a serious bar to the exact reproduction of descriptive passages consisting of numerous, carefully related, details. And the same obstacle would exist whether the original in question were in verse or prose, in French or English: the difficulty of reproducing both the sense and the sequence of ideas and reconciling them with the strong rhythms and linked sounds of alliterative verse is formidable in any circumstances. But when, in addition, the descriptive passages depend for their effect upon a subtle combination of details, the use of emotive terms and the reiteration of certain words, whose delicate balance seems unlikely to survive the process of translation unimpaired, and when the alliterative version is not only unusually consistent and perfect in itself, but unexampled

1) G.L. Kittredge, op.cit., p.128.

elsewhere, there is a strong supposition that they have been freely composed by an original creative imagination, rather than translated by a patient but unoriginal redactor.

These considerations have resulted in certain limited passages of Sir Gawain being attributed to the alliterative author, even by those who are confident that he worked directly from a written source. The implications of such a theory are, however, much wider than most authorities acknowledge. Throughout the English romance the descriptive element is consistent and homogeneous. The intense visualization by which the situations are evoked, by which the characters are given life, depends, like the set descriptions, on the same subtle combination of aptly-chosen details. But, dispersed here and there, in a multitude of brief references whose effect is cumulative, its subtlety would be less likely to survive the process of redaction without being blurred or obscured. Yet it is upon the success of the visual element in all its aspects that the artistic success of the alliterative author's whole creation depends. "Every feature of this poet's success derives in the end from his instinct for the picturesque, the fine talent for seeing and describing which he possessed, and the discrimination in selection which he exercised. The men, the objects and the observations he puts into his romance have outgrown the story which was his subject; their vivid imaginative existence is hardly due to this at all, but is the entire product of his fancy, just as the coherence, the good order and the decent limits of his subject were imposed by his taste. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is remarkable for the small contribution made by the story and material to its success, and for the extent of the transformation of that material by the poet's

imagination?⁽¹⁾

The nature of the descriptive element may seem too narrow a basis on which to found such a sweeping estimate of the originality of the alliterative Gawain, by comparison with the documentary evidence produced by the various source-studies. But, in effect, by approaching the problem from this peripheral stand-point, it may be possible to evaluate the creative achievement of the English poet more exactly than by confining attention to those aspects of construction and motivation on which the source-studies offer limited, -and conflicting-, evidence. The descriptive passages in Gawain are marked by a creative intelligence which expressed itself in a highly individual way, and the nature of the element, as well as the inherent difficulty of the alliterative medium, suggests that they are the result of original composition rather than reproduction at second hand. But the talent for visualization which distinguishes these passages is largely responsible for the effectiveness of other, more fundamental, aspects of the alliterative work. The unconventional and unusually convincing characterization is achieved by the same vivid pictorial presentation of person, manner, address, involving a similar selectivity, sense of proportion and confident control of detail. The method by which the supernatural agents and events are reconciled to the natural world in which they operate requires the same delicate contrivance of effect, by the association of visual features in which the credible and the fantastic are cunningly intermingled. And upon the effectiveness of these two aspects of the romance depends the acceptance of its moral

1) G. Leach, op.cit., p. 76.

these, since the hero's behaviour under trial can carry conviction only if it is consistent with his personality and the testing agents, human and supernatural, are sufficiently credible to command respect. In the last analysis, therefore, the unique quality of the most fundamental features of Sir Gawain results from a method of presentation so subtle and complex that it seems equally improbable that it could be accurately reproduced in an alliterative medium, and that the English poet should not have exercised creative control over it, unhindered by the dictates of an original. And, in effect, ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~English~~ ^{English} poet was prepared to attribute to the alliterative author a major part in the elaboration of these aspects of the romance, while denying him any part in shaping the narrative itself⁽¹⁾. Yet, though the argument based on the nature of the medium cannot apply here, the construction of Sir Gawain reveals the same unity of conception, the same sense of proportion, and the same subtle relation of parts to the whole, which marks these magnificent elements. In the absence of any conclusive proof that the structure of the romance was already fixed and complete before it came into the hands of the English poet, it seems justifiable to assume that he exercised upon its construction the same creative

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- 1) "He followed the plot with substantial faithfulness, as we have already seen; but he elaborated every detail of description with a richness of fancy quite foreign to the sober narrative style of his original, he gave life to the personages and vividness to the action, and he inspired the whole with an ethical earnestness that ennobles the tale without making it less romantic. The Frenchman was a first-rate raconteur who combined two independent stories into a single plot with a high degree of constructive ability, and he was master of a flowing and limpid style exquisitely adapted to straightforward story-telling. The Englishman was an idealist and a true poet, who saw, in the capital story which his French predecessor had told so acceptably, the possibility of illustrating the finest traits of the medieval gentleman, who controlled an elaborate and difficult poetical technique in such a way as to make it a natural vehicle not merely for the description in which he delighted, but for dramatic action as well, and who built up, on the basis of the

control which is apparent in the treatment of character, moral content, and descriptive elaboration, and that the consistent artistic personality stamped upon the work as a whole is his, not merely the reflection of a predecessor whose creation he inherited.

The only prima facie basis on which we are entitled to judge the creative ability of the English author, however, is his achievement in the one field where we can be confident that his original, whatever its form, could give him no guidance,--the management of the medium in which he wrote. No one will deny his success in manipulating,--perhaps in creating⁽¹⁾, a verse-form which, despite its comparative rigidity, is capable of great range and subtlety of expression. The potentialities of alliterative verse have nowhere been better demonstrated than in Sir Gawayn, where it is used, with equal facility, as the medium of direct narration, of witty and allusive conversation, and of evocative description. But the result is something more than an example of technical mastery: one of the rare instances in Medieval poetry where verse is more than a conventional literary medium, where every aspect of the subject is expressed by genuine poetic means. Poetic ability need not necessarily imply powers of construction or psychological insight in the creation of characters. But, quite apart from the consideration that poetic achievement is more improbable in the work of a translator or an imitative redactor, than in that of an

(Cont.) excellent French romance, which was on a par with numerous others quite as good and quite as well-told, a unique masterpiece in the grandiose manner? (G.L. Kittredge, op.cit., p.129.)

1) "So far as is known, it is unique though related to other stanza forms which employ the alliterative long line; but, if the poet did not invent it himself, he was fully alive to its potentialities" (D. Everett, op.cit., p.74.)

original writer or one whose approach to his source was relatively independent, this evidence of creative power on the part of the alliterative poet must inevitably influence our assessment of his share in the creation of the romance as a whole. It seems unlikely that a poet so fastidious in his control of poetic detail would be content to accept another's creation, without adapting it to conform to his personal tastes and those of the particular audience for which he intended it. And when we find that the unique appeal of the romance depends so largely upon details of presentation and expression, which, in turn, are intimately related to the nature of the poetic medium, it is not unnatural to see the alliterative poet as the controlling intelligence chiefly responsible for every aspect of the work. In the absence of more conclusive evidence on the nature of the original than we possess at present, the creative process cannot be defined with precision, but in any analysis of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight the nature of the alliterative medium and its relation to other aspects of the poem must be regarded as of fundamental importance.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Amongst general features of the body of alliterative romance certainly the most striking and perhaps, in the last analysis, the most significant is the limited extent of its dependence upon French romance. Of the eleven poems and two fragments which have generally been classed as romances only four can be related to specific French sources with sufficient certainty to permit the analysis of the redactive process. Amongst the remainder there are some which suggest French influence, though a textual connection with any existing romance remains unproven. The French origin of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has not been established with enough assurance to exclude alternative theories, and the unique nature of the poem prevents any dogmatic assumption of its dependence upon romance tradition. Further research may clarify the situation here and in the case of Haute Meulcear and The Awntyrs off Arthure, but for the present all that can usefully be said of these latter is that, though one employs the characters and framework of Carolingian epic the other of Arthurian romance, both are distinguished from the French narrative tradition, the first by its humorous and 'popular' exploitation of the conventions, the second by its overt

moral purpose, to such an extent as to make it unwise to assume that the alliterative redactors contributed nothing of fundamental importance and that only the language and medium are native and original.

Whatever their immediate sources may have been these two poems have only a peripheral association with French romance, to which the nature rather than the presentation of their story-matter links them. The other alliterative narratives, classified as 'chronicles in the epic manner', are still more remote from the French romance tradition. The Alexander poems, The Destruction of Erec and Morte Arthure deal with the familiar matter of the Arthurian romances and the romances of Antiquity, but in the pseudo-historical form in which it existed before the authors of romance fell heir to it, while The Destruction of Jerusalem, quite outside the tradition, is concerned with historical and religious rather than romantic themes. In making use of such material the alliterative poets looked back to a tradition much older than that of the Roman romances, one which was part of the common European heritage rather than the preserve of any particular country and whose associations were with the international medium of Latin.

In making their redactions from the Latin chronicles and pseudo-chronicles these alliterative poets were merely fulfilling the function of the independent, creative author of the Middle Ages, drawing upon historical matter in the authoritative and respectable sources in which it was available to all. In these instances the redactive process need not imply what is normally involved in the case of the Middle English romances, the passive reproduction of another man's work, but rather the same original and creative function which was exercised by those French romance writers who themselves made use of the Matter of Antiquity in the Latin chronicles or of Arthurian matter in Geoffrey's

Historia Regum Britanniae, or, at second hand, in Wace and Gaimar. Even if research should ultimately demonstrate that the alliterative poets were indebted to French versions of the chronicles rather than the Latin originals, their choice of such historical and factual sources will not lose its significance. That they, writing in the Fourteenth century, should prefer story-matter virtually uncontaminated by romantic elements, suggests a conception of narrative poetry amongst the alliterative authors closer to that of Wace than to the dominant tradition of the roman courtois. Yet the chronicle-romances which they based upon this matter are in no sense archaic or provincial, though ignoring the refinements in treatment and interpretation introduced by Chrétien and his successors. They do, however, reflect a preference for such material in a form characterised by the realism of the chronicle rather than the fantasy of the romance, predominantly concerned with the actions of heroes rather than the emotions of knights and ladies, heroic rather than chivalric in spirit, epic rather than romantic in atmosphere. All questions of source and the nature of the redactive process apart, it is surely significant that such a large part of alliterative narrative, including the longer and more ambitious poems, should reject the tradition of the roman courtois in favour of the more primitive, more realistic, less literary and less purely French tradition of the epic chronicle.

The degree of independence from the dominant romance tradition suggested by the limited selection of French originals, the distinctive nature of those poems whose association with French literature remains unproven, and the marked preference for material drawn from Latin chronicles, is in contrast with the general assumption that Middle English romances are based upon French sources and that,

collectively, the range of elements they contain will not include anything foreign to the French tradition. It may be that in the light of research upon individual romances this generalisation will ultimately require modification, and, in some instances where a feasible original cannot be discovered, the assumption of a French source on grounds of probability may prove to be unfounded. If, however, the generalisation is accepted as such, this would seem to provide one fundamental distinction between the alliterative examples and other romances in Middle English, since the former make use of Latin sources, or, more significantly, of material from the chronicles, to a much greater extent than the non-alliterative tradition would lead us to expect.

These circumstances lend particular importance to the choice of subject-matter by those alliterative poets who appear, by their employment of French originals, more closely allied to the dominant romance tradition. Their works form too small a part of alliterative romance to make it likely that their selection of material will have a significant bearing upon the relation of the corpus to Middle English romance as a whole, and, in effect, the range of story-matter involved is too diverse to suggest any distinctive taste or preference on their part. The matter of William of Palerne is not drawn from any of the major categories of Medieval romance, but from a distinctive and individual work whose extra-narrative associations are believed to have been of a specialised and personal nature, meaningful to the original French audience but not to readers of the English redaction. The attraction of Guillaume de Palerne for such readers must, therefore, have been inherent in the story-matter as such, rather than in its connection with a familiar type of romance material. The original of Chevalere Assigne, on the other hand, belongs to the epic matter of France, not, it

is true, to the classic legends of Charlemagne, but to a cycle primarily inspired by contemporary history and ultimately much affected by the influence of the roman courtois. The other alliterative poems considered here are all associated with the Matter of Britain, though in the case of Joseph of Arimathea with an episode, from the early history of the Grail, somewhat remote from the general character of Arthurian legend. Only Golagrus and Gawain, drawn from one of the continuations of Chrétien's Roman de Perceval, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, whose closest analogues in French literature belong to the same romance complex, suggest an interest in the classic matter of the roman courtois and in a particular Arthurian hero, but the association of Sir Gawain with the Conte del Graal is too uncertain to support any dogmatic theory of preferences amongst the authors of alliterative romances.

Their choice of story-matter therefore provides no basis for contrast with the general corpus of Middle English romance. The selection includes material from the classic cycles and from miscellaneous romances, much from the most exploited sources of the period and something relatively obscure in origin. It suggests that the alliterative poets did not discriminate between epic and romantic matter, yet their debt to the Matter of France is too slight to support the conception that it had a particular appeal for English audiences. In effect, the only significant contrast between alliterative and non-alliterative narrative in this respect is provided by the chronicle-romances. Their exploitation of the European heritage of pseudo-history rather than anything distinctive in the source-matter of the romances examined here, has, no doubt, been largely responsible for the conception that English authors were especially attracted by epic themes, as well as for the unusual degree of realism attributed to alliterative narrative.

If such realism is found to be characteristic of the alliterative romances of French origin it must derive from the treatment rather than the selection of story-matter.

In their conception of romance form, at least, the alliterative poets would appear to have differed considerably from the French authors whose creations they utilized, and this, in turn, has influenced their choice of source-matter. Only the relatively unoriginal William of Palerne reproduces the form of its original: the joint adventures of hero and heroine constituting a unified whole, susceptible of abbreviation but not of redaction in part. The other romances of known origin represent partial and, indeed, very limited selections, far from representative of the sources from which they were taken. Chevalere Assigne is no more than a fragment of the Crusade Cycle and the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, from which it derives, is the least representative section of this chanson de geste. But if the English poet rejected the epic matter available to him in the cycle, he also ignored the romantic extensions to it in the Chevalier au Cygne and Enfances Godfrey, and, in effect, he has isolated an incident common to the folklore of many countries, whose inclusion in the French work was purely arbitrary. The form and scope of the alliterative version are those of the folk-tale or popular short story, rather than the romance or chanson de geste: the great sweep of the epic cycle apparently made no appeal to the alliterative redactor, and, though his chosen matter was barely coloured by the context from which it came, he did not attempt to reinterpret it in terms of romance.

The limited section of the Estoire del Saint Graal used in Joseph of Aramathia bears something of the same relation to the

complex of Grail romances of which it forms part. The central interest of the cycle lies in the infusion of Arthurian legend with a Christian mysticism designed to give a more profound, religious significance to chivalric ideals. In this respect the Estoire is merely preparatory, establishing a pseudo-historical basis for the association between Chivalry and Christianity assumed by Chrétien and his successors, by drawing upon the legends of Joseph of Arimathea and similar matter which constitutes a kind of Christian folk-lore. But the problem facing the partial redactor in this instance was much more complex than in the case of Chevalere Assigne, since here the pre-romantic material has been more thoroughly assimilated and the early history of the Grail is interspersed with chivalric episodes very similar to those which constitute the bulk of the cycle. The choice of the Estoire in preference to more conventionally romantic episodes might be interpreted as further evidence of that interest in pseudo-historical matter amongst alliterative authors which produced the 'chronicles in the epic manner'. But, if so, it seems unlikely that the redaction would have been abandoned before reaching that part of the original most likely to appeal to such an interest in an English audience,—the role played by Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail in the conversion of Britain,—and that so much attention would have been given to the chivalric episodes which interrupt the record of early Christianity. Partial redaction from such a source posed problems of form and thematic unity which the alliterative author has not solved. Though the main incident selected by him is self-contained in narrative terms its original significance has been lost through its arbitrary isolation in the alliterative poem, which is neither a unified romance, nor a narrative outline for popular consumption, but merely a fragment, specifically literary yet formless, a crumb from the

vast banquet of the Vulgate Cycle. His failure to come to terms with the fundamental theme in his original is reflected in his inability to make a clear-cut choice between the narrative and didactic elements, though in the brief English extract the significance of their interconnection does not have scope in which to develop properly. Like the author of Chevalere Assigne he chose to ignore the formal model afforded by his source and the function originally served by the episodes which he selected from it. Both of them made use of major French works as quarries for their own, more modest, constructions, casting them in a form which has more in common with the short folk-tale than with the roman courtois, and selecting story-matter in which the familiar elements of romance are not of dominant importance.

The relation of the two Gawain romances to the form and content of the sources with which they have been associated is less negative in nature, though not less original and independent. The acknowledged debt of the one and the possible debt of the other to the First Continuation of Chrétien's Perceval clearly did not extend to matters of form. The case can only be argued with confidence as regards Colagrus and Gawain, but the evidence in that instance is significant in its bearing upon Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. This redactor also has quarried from a vast cyclic compilation, primarily, though sporadically, concerned with the Grail, but though, like the author of Joseph of Aramathie, he ignored the Grail theme, it was in favour of an episode characteristic of the roman courtois in its full-blown development. His reinterpretation of the chosen matter is not in question here, but it is associated with a radical alteration in form, resulting in a well-finished romance, which, in its self-contained narrative and thematic

unity, its integration of disconnected incidents, its controlled and balanced proportions, is satisfying and successful while contrasting in almost every respect with the form of the French original.

The form of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is even more complex and sophisticated, yet nothing in the narrative analogues for in romance tradition, either French or English, compels us to assume that both form and matter were inherited by the alliterative poet substantially as he has given them. The example of Colagrus and Gawain may legitimately suggest that another alliterative poet, a century earlier but in a less remote district, was capable of an equally fundamental process of redaction, and that, whatever the nature of his source, he may well have produced a version radically different in structure. Whether the compilation involved an equally discriminate selection of story-matter must remain undetermined, but the unity of theme and narrative in Sir Gawain finds a closer parallel in Colagrus and Gawain than in any of the postulated sources. Both poems can be classified as romances without that straining of the category which is necessary if Chevalere Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie are to be included, yet neither suggests uncritical acceptance of the form and subject-matter of the French romances to which they have been related.

Of these five alliterative romances, therefore, only William of Palerne can be said to reproduce substantially the form and content of its original, which, in itself, is more unified, both in theme and narrative, than the majority of French romances. The others, related to the sprawling cyclic romances and romanticised epics, reject both their scale and their episodic form, and, for the most part, the themes with which they are chiefly concerned. The alliterative redactors apparently

considered the romance as a narrative limited in scope, unified rather than episodic, depending for its appeal upon the interest of its story-matter and not upon its concern with more cosmic themes centered round the Grail or the Crusades. Their selection of material is not, therefore, representative of the sources from which they derived it, and they are not to be classified by referring them to the categories represented by their French originals.

While our knowledge of the sources of many Middle English romances remains incomplete it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the alliterative poets were distinctive in rejecting the original form and combination of story-matter presented by the French romances on which they drew. The comparative brevity of many English versions, the limited scope of their adventures, and the absence, prior to the Fifteenth century, of complex romances comparable to the Grail and Crusade cycles, suggests that in this respect the alliterative poets have more in common with their English contemporaries than with the majority of French authors. In so far as their choice of story-matter is concerned, it finds a parallel in the large proportion of miscellaneous subjects amongst the existing English romances in other media. The range of alliterative texts is, however, too limited to support a dogmatic conclusion. But it is, perhaps, significant, that the cyclic romances from which some of the alliterative poets made limited selections appeared again ~~again~~ in English during the Fifteenth century, but, on this occasion, in much more complete and literal versions. These were the result of the growing linguistic barrier which, at that period, was gradually depriving all but the most sophisticated English audience of access to literature in French, and, being designed to make the originals available without alteration, only the language employed is native.

Their uncritical acceptance and reproduction of the form and content of their originals is in significant contrast with the earlier alliterative versions, which, whatever their individual merits or failings, imply a conception of romance at variance with that of the French examples from which their material was drawn.⁽¹⁾

The alliterative romances from French sources belong, in general, to a period when the use of such originals implied adaptation rather than mere translation. Though they range in date from c.1350 to the latter part of the Fifteenth century, in effect only Colagus and Gawain is later than the second half of the Fourteenth, and the time-lag which affects Scottish literature in the Middle Ages merely disguises the fact that its affiliations are not with contemporary English romance but with the other alliterative examples of a century earlier. These come not only from the first flush of the Alliterative Revival, but also from the peak period of romance production in England. There is, therefore, nothing in the dating of the alliterative examples to support the conception that French influence penetrated the West more slowly and at a later period than other, more accessible, regions. Nor would it be valid to suppose that the French romance tradition reached alliterative authors in a more fragmentary condition than was usual in the case of others, since the existing versions suggest a deliberate choice of matter rather than the redaction of fragments which represent chance survivals. Consequently, the time-lag between the alliterative versions and their originals is neither greater nor less

1) Some of these Fifteenth century versions of the cyclic romances justify the selective approach of the alliterative redactors. Those in prose are quite readable but the clumsiness and tedium of Henry Lovelich's History of the Holy Grail, extant, though incomplete, in 23,794 octosyllabic lines, suggests how unfortunate a full version of the Vulgate Cycle in alliterative verse would have been.

than is usual in the case of Middle English romances, and, to judge from the examples of various branches of the tradition represented amongst the alliterative poems, the accumulation of romance composition was available to Western poets as freely as to other English authors, and was used by them with equally little discrimination between the different kinds of material represented there.

So far as these general and external features are concerned no fundamental distinction can be made between the body of Middle English romance and those few alliterative examples which are based upon French originals. In so far as such a distinction exists it must, therefore, derive from the conduct of the redaction and the nature of the end-product in each case. This inevitably raises the question as to whether or not the existing texts can legitimately be interpreted as the work of an individual redactor. Admitting that, in the circumstances of the period, surviving manuscripts are unlikely to represent the author's autograph in every detail, the issue of literary importance is whether the work as we have it is the product of a redactive process conceived and executed by one man or of haphazard evolution over a period of years, in the hands of various story-tellers who made use of the material for their own purposes. Where, as with each of the alliterative romances, only a unique text survives, giving no indication of intermediate versions, opinions on the matter must be largely subjective.

But in some cases at least, critical estimates would probably show a certain consensus of opinion in this respect. Few people would question the assumption that William of Palerne represents the work of an individual redactor: the close relationship between the alliterative version and its original, the consistency of the redactive process,

and the humorous over-tones inherent in the expression, all suggest individuality and a personal style in its execution. Colagrus and Gawain differs so radically from its French original as to allow the objective possibility that it may be the result of an accumulative process in which one redactor was responsible for the isolation of the incidents employed, another for their combination into a coherent whole, and a third for the final presentation in alliterative verse. But subjectively it is difficult to admit that such a process could produce a work so thoroughly integrated, in which the reinterpretation of theme and narrative incident are so effectively interrelated, and the success of the whole rests to such an extent on the consistency of characterization and the invention of descriptive detail. The fundamental nature of the redaction would seem to indicate that a single controlling intelligence was responsible, not only for the ordering of the material but for a choice of incident consistent with the conception of the romance as a whole. Of the selection and ordering of story-matter in Sir Gawain nothing can be said with certainty, but though the sense of form, narrative control and thematic cohesion which distinguish the poem might conceivably be due to a preliminary redactor or even to the French originator, the unique nature of the romance depends, in the last analysis, upon the creation and ordering of details towards a pre-determined pattern too subtle and complex to be achieved by a piece-meal redaction. In the case of Chevalere Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie it is not possible to speak with the same assurance. Neither is so consistently faithful to its French original as to eliminate the possibility of intermediate redactions. But though, conceivably, the selection of story-matter and the general shaping of the romances may be due to earlier authors, the

existing texts, despite their inconsistencies, do reflect an individual conception of the redactive process, and contain occasional verbal echoes of the French source which suggest direct acquaintance with it.

In this respect no valid comparison can be made between the general corpus of Middle English romance, where so little is known of the process of composition, and these few alliterative examples. But at least one suggestion made in connection with the former can scarcely be applied to the latter: the conception of progressive redaction through oral transmission must be excluded, not only by the length of William of Palerne and Sir Gawain but by the complexity of the alliterative medium, which, especially in combination with the elaborate rhyme-scheme of Colerus and Gawain, makes it unsuitable for memorisation. The suggestion is due to the haphazard and unfinished effect of many Middle English romances and to their lack of individuality. The subjective impression that the alliterative romances are substantially the work of individual authors would suggest that this is a feature which genuinely distinguishes them from other contemporary examples of the form. It must, however, be remembered that the generalisation concerning oral redaction has been based upon the English romances as a whole, and that in some instances the individuality of the alliterative versions is only apparent in comparison with their French originals. Comparative study of the non-alliterative romances on the same basis might modify the apparent contrast in this respect.

Whether or not individual control of the redactive process constitutes a point of contrast between alliterative and other romances it is abundantly clear that no generalisation can be applied to the very diverse types of redaction represented by the former. The character of the redaction in each case is at variance with the common conception

of English romances as indiscriminate abbreviations of French versions, in most of which the plan of the original is ignored or obscured and is not replaced by a new pattern, either formal or interpretative. This is admittedly an over-simplified characterisation of the Middle English redactions, but the degree to which the alliterative examples deviate from it, and the variety of redactive processes which they demonstrate is sufficient to suggest a genuine contrast between them and the body of non-alliterative romance. William of Palerne is distinguished by the fidelity with which it adheres to its source, giving a version which, far from being an abbreviation, was probably somewhat longer than the French text, before the loss of several leaves from the manuscript. The apparent expansion is due, not to the insertion of new material expressive of personal interests on the part of the redactor, but to his evident desire to lose as little as possible in translating the slowly-pushed original into a less pliant medium. Though his version is not devoid of individuality its most striking characteristic is a patent intention to reproduce the original in all essentials. William of Palerne is a French romance in a native medium, and the only alliterative romance which can in any sense be considered as a translation.

Of the others, Chevalere Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie correspond most closely to the common conception of Middle English redactions from French romance. Both represent radical abbreviations of their originals, though the degree of compression is difficult to estimate, due, in one case, to the variable length of existing versions of the source and, in the other, to the impossibility of equating the alliterative verse with the rambling prose of the Vulgate Cycle.

But though in one instance the abbreviation is largely a technical matter in the other it represents an attempt to alter the basic character of the French original. The author of Chevalere Assigne confined his expression of personal taste to the selection of story-matter: having isolated it from its context he left the episode virtually unaltered in character, without attempting to discriminate between the basic folk-tale and the romantic elements with which it had been diluted. Joseph of Aramathie, however, shows sporadic attempts to separate the narrative of chivalric adventures from the homiletic material associated with it in the original. True, the result is confused and unimpressive, but in attempting the disotomy the alliterative redactor implicitly rejected that combination of elements which constituted the distinctive characteristic of the French original.

Neither of these redactions can be regarded as passive, but they demonstrate an approach to French material which is largely negative in character, rejecting the original conception of the story-matter without attempting to reinterpret it in a new context. By contrast Colerus and Gawain is both positive and highly original in its relation to the French source. Just as the redactor's limited selection of story-matter from the Ferneval-complex indicates his rejection of the cyclic form of the original, so his highly individual conception of romance is reflected, in his version, by a radical alteration of the whole character of the borrowed material. His treatment has been extremely selective, omitting some incidents completely, modifying others, re-arranging the sequence of events, supplying new motives for the action and altering the characterization in keeping with this new conception of the narrative. There is nothing haphazard or experimental about

his work, and the result is a unified whole in which theme and narrative, character and motivation are significantly interrelated in a manner very different from the original, yet obviously related to and derived from it. Under these circumstances the conventional issue of abbreviation does not arise since the two versions are so loosely related: to balance its many omissions and abbreviated narration of events the alliterative text extends some sections by the inclusion of material, notably in speeches and descriptive passages, for which there is no warrant in the French. The character of the whole is in direct contrast with the common conception of the redactive process in the Middle English romances.

What little we know of its French analogues, as well as the evidence of romance tradition, suggests that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight may well be the product of an equally radical process of redaction. Though it cannot be proven objectively that the narrative and thematic unity, the economy and coherence of incident, subservience of details to the whole, subtle contrivance of effect, and individuality in characterization which mark Sir Gawain, originated with the alliterative author and distinguished his version from its original, whether French or not, yet the contrast with romance tradition in most of these respects is presumptive evidence to that effect. And in the absence of a known original, the example of Colagrins and Gawain, where a similar contrast exists, may suggest the process by which such a distinctive redaction might be achieved. It is true that Sir Gawain shows certain refinements, --in the rhetorical balancing of incidents and the creation of atmosphere by the manipulation of descriptive detail, for example--, which cannot be matched in Colagrins and Gawain, but these are elements of the type least likely to survive translation into alliterative verse, and if we postulate

the redactor's responsibility for the general character of the distinctive alliterative version we may reasonably assume that he was responsible for these features also. Within the context of the other alliterative romances considered here there is sufficient evidence of a fundamental approach to the business of redaction, and of an original and independent assumption of the nature of romance, to forbid the assumption that all those features which distinguish Sir Gawain from the common run of Medieval romances must have been inherited from its source, whatever this may have been. But even without the presumptive testimony of Sir Gawain the alliterative redactions display a variety of aims and procedures, ranging from the patient reproduction of a French work to the virtual creation of a new romance from selected elements of the original, sufficient to cast doubt on a generalisation which assumes that amongst English authors the redactive process was single, uniform and unvarying from period to period and instance to instance. Even as applied to the non-alliterative romances in English such a generalisation must be regarded with suspicion, but the variety of the alliterative redactions, and the individuality of the two Gawain poems in particular, would seem to imply that this is one respect in which the difference of medium is associated with a more fundamental distinction in nature and treatment.

If the character of the redactive process does constitute such a distinction between the alliterative romances and others in Middle English, then we may expect to find it reflected in the treatment of individual aspects of the French originals. The general conception of the Middle English romance assumes that it deals almost exclusively with the narration of adventures and that the redactors were chiefly concerned to separate such a narrative from the other

elements with which it was associated. This was certainly the primary purpose of the redactor who produced William of Palerne: he has been at pains to preserve the adventurous content of the original in all its ramifications and even, apparently, to add to it some further complications. But in doing so he has not materially altered the character of the parent work, since as a roman d'aventures it consists very largely of an extended sequence of narrative incidents, only occasionally interspersed with emotional elements. The redactor shows a certain impatience with the latter, but he has redressed the balance of his omissions by abbreviating some scenes of action whose outcome, rather than their detailed content, is material to the plot. In effect, both the French and the English versions are a salutary reminder that the narrative of adventures is the essential basis of romance in any language, and that comment upon the extent to which English redactors favoured this element must take into account the balance between it and other components of the individual source employed.

In this, as in other respects, Chevaliers Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie conform more closely to the expected pattern of Middle English romance. The former concentrates upon the adventurous element in its source to the neglect of descriptive detail, attempting sporadic rearrangements of the original sequence to achieve a more close-packed and smoothly developing narrative. Yet, though the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne itself is predominantly concerned with the narration of adventures, the alliterative version represents a drastic abbreviation confined to those incidents which advance the story and omitting such subsidiary action as that involved in scenes of chivalric combat. This would suggest that the appeal of action for English redactors is not

to be considered as axiomatic, and that the conception of romance upon which they proceeded must be taken into account. Here, in the case of a redactor whose aim is to reduce his original to the narrative outline of a folk-tale, the appeal of adventure has not been sufficient to dissuade him from rejecting much of the source-matter. Joseph of Aramathie suggests somewhat the same limited conception of romance as an outline of narrative incident, but here the redactor has been restrained in his abbreviation by the intermingling of adventure with religious homily. His attempts to discriminate between these two elements have resulted in an incoherent version in which the narrative of action predominates but not to the complete exclusion of didactic material. The redactor's efforts to give continuity and coherence to the action, by reordering the original sequence and abbreviating the intrusive homilies, suggests that his primary interest was in the narrative of adventure, yet this has not prevented him from treating it much more summarily than did the original author.

In these three romances, admittedly, action predominates over extra-narrative elements. Colagrus and Gawain, on the other hand, illustrates a type of romance in which the action is of secondary importance to the personal and social ideals expressed through it. It is true that this subservience of action to ideals already existed in the French original, but the alliterative redactor, far from attempting to redress the balance in keeping with the common conception of English romance, has emphasised it by his omission of certain narrative incidents. Indeed, the rigidity of the rhymed alliterative stanza has reduced the element of direct narration to the bare minimum so that it is no more than a framework for the description of action on the limited

scale of hand-to-hand combat and for the presentation of the reactions of those involved in the chivalric situations which it sketches. Though the alliterative author takes an obvious pleasure in the action of combat, his limited choice from the endless adventures of the Percival-complex suggests that the narration of such incidents for their own sake made no appeal to him. The number of stanzas in his poem devoted to advancing the action is small by comparison with the number given to extra-narrative elements, and it is the latter which represent his own additions to the material of the French original.

The dichotomy between narrative and extra-narrative elements is less rigid in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, where the medium is more suited to the outlining of events in sequence, but such narration is by no means the dominant element in the poem. Neither the nature nor the range of adventures it involves distinguishes this from other romances: it is the subtlety with which the plot has been contrived, the vividness and credibility with which its incidents are presented, and the convincing realisation of the characters which vitalises its combination of familiar romance motifs. The narrative was evidently valued for its inherent interest not, as so often in the roman courtois, as an excuse for the analysis of emotions or the discussion of social codes, yet the alliterative author, narrating with ease and economy, has given most space and attention to those incidentals, partly narrative, partly descriptive, which make even the most improbable episodes acceptable and humanly convincing. This is in itself evidence of an interest in the narrative of adventures, but at a more profound level than is implied by the generalisation upon the preoccupation of English romance-writers with narrative incident to the exclusion of everything else.

To what extent the alliterative author is responsible for the balance between narrative and extra-narrative elements in Sir Gawain is impossible to determine, since the difference between the presentation of the story here and in the comparatively conventional French versions is precisely what distinguishes this romance from the common tradition of the form. And the distinctive realisation of the narrative in the alliterative version consists in an imaginative control of detail, which, if it was not the work of the English redactor, at least implies sensitive appreciation of his source and immense patience and care in reproducing it. The fact that Colagrins and Gawain gives depth, conviction and reality to a conventional French narrative by a similar, though more rudimentary, manipulation of extra-narrative details, may at least suggest that such imaginative extension of the superficial appeal of adventurous incident was not beyond the powers of alliterative poets, or, whatever may have been the case earlier, outwith the interests of the readers of later Middle English romance.

It is generally assumed, as a natural corollary to the preoccupation of most English authors with the adventurous incident of romance, that they felt no interest in, and, where possible, ignored the social codes which the roman courtois was designed to discuss and demonstrate. Generalisations on the subject suggest that the refinements of Chivalry made no appeal to them and that they ignored exponents of the knightly code in favour of the popular hero of action. This supposes a fundamental distinction between English romances and their French originals which is not always apparent in individual cases. Despite the aristocratic veneer which has been given to Guillaume de Palerne the chivalric element in the romance is comparatively limited:

in most of his adventures William remains a simple, boyish hero, whose feats have the unsophisticated character of the folk-lore from which they probably derive, and only in the battle-scenes does he act in accord with knightly conventions. Significantly, it is precisely in these scenes that the redactor, usually so faithful to his source, has taken most liberally, omitting some episodes and abbreviating others. He has chosen to concentrate upon the practical outcome of the action as a whole rather than on those details of personal combat in which chivalric qualities show themselves, and even the deeds by which the hero wins knighthood have not excited any particular interest on his part.

In Chevaliers Legend as in William of Palerne Chivalry is essentially an intrusive element: the folk-tale upon which this episode also is based required that the hero should fight in defence of his mother, but the conventions of the chivalric romance are responsible for the interpretation of the incident in terms of the judicial duel. And here, too, the alliterative redactor has concentrated upon the practical outcome of the engagement and the supernatural agents involved, to the neglect of military detail and ceremonial preliminaries. Where he seems to have taken some interest in Chivalry, by giving a disproportionately full account of the hero's training in arms, it is the boy's behaviour, his innocent blunders and naïf questions, which receive attention and which, perhaps, imply a certain mockery of chivalric conventions. The chivalric element in Joseph of Aramathie is more conventional and more deeply-rooted, since the secondary heroes, Grakel and Seraphis, as prototypes of the Christian knights of the Grail cycle, behave as they do. The alliterative redactor shows a more consistent interest in their military adventures than in any other aspect of the original, but rather

with regard to the intrinsic interest of the action than its chivalric import. He was apparently unexcited by the link forged between Chivalry and Christianity in the Estoire and his occasional expansion of battle descriptions is counterbalanced by his abbreviation of the conversion and dubbing of the first Christian knights.

In this, as in other respects, Golagrus and Gawain is the most original and distinctive of the redactions whose sources are known. The original episode, like many of those in the Perceval-complex, was designed to demonstrate the perfection of knightly conduct by confronting the hero with a somewhat artificial dilemma which he resolves by refined observance of the chivalric code. For the French author the attraction of such an episode clearly lay in the working out of a paradoxical conflict of knightly duties, which involves the hero in an apparent sacrifice of honour yet ultimately redounds to his credit. Despite its improbabilities the English redactor has accepted the incident for its intrinsic interest, and has done everything in his power to make it credible in terms of natural behaviour. Though the centre of interest in the romance remains a clash between opposed principles, this arises, in the alliterative version, from the opponents' conceptions of what is due to their personal honour rather than from their obedience to conflicting articles of the chivalric code. Since that code was based upon honour and personal integrity the distinction between the French and English versions is not absolute, but the stress which the latter places upon the characters of the protagonists, the realistic motivation of their behaviour, and the description of their emotional reactions, suggest that the redactor's interest was in conduct rather than in the ramifications of the code of Chivalry. The

contrast between the two interpretations is well illustrated in their treatment of combat: the formalised duel of the French version, conducted according to the rules of the chivalric joust, becomes, in the alliterative romances, a miniature battle, harshly realistic in presentation and effect. Neither this metamorphosis nor anything else in the English poem suggests that the redactor was ignorant of chivalric theory or knightly practices, and, indeed, his interpretation rests upon a more profound and ennobling concept of knighthood than the somewhat mechanical and artificial presentation of the original. His imaginative apprehension of the episode was essentially realistic, and it was this rather than any lack of familiarity with Chivalry which led him to concentrate upon its practical influence upon character and conduct to the neglect of more formal aspects of the code.

Even without knowledge of his sources it seems possible to suggest that the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight also was primarily interested in natural behaviour and nobility of character, rather than in their formalised expression in obedience to the contemporary social code. Here the core of the romance is a multiple test of knightly character, but though the basic concepts of Chivalry underlie the presentation of the story-matter, and are implicit in the wording of the Green Knight's challenge to Arthur's company, in Gawain's acceptance of it and in his concern for his honour throughout the adventure, the explicit theme is moral and Christian rather than social and chivalric. And in the working out of the theme the character of Gawain rather than his adherence to the knightly code provides the unifying interest of the poem. The fact that on several occasions his behaviour conflicts with the dictates of his conscience gives an

effect of psychological realism more convincing in human terms than the unnatural perfection with which the heroes of the roman courtois adhere to the chivalric code. The neglect of Chivalry can scarcely be due to ignorance on the part of the alliterative author: he has made skilful use of the trappings of knighthood,--notably in the passages on Gawain's armour and heraldic bearing--,but as a means of giving graphic expression to aspects of character and reputation rather than as elements of intrinsic interest. Whether such treatment was dictated by his source is impossible to say, though if that source was a French romance it seems unlikely that its chivalric content can have been confined to such incidentals. But, here as elsewhere, the example of Colagrus and Gawain may be illuminating. In both poems the hero is faced with a dilemma in which quixotic adherence to the code of Chivalry seems to imply death or disgrace, and in both a regard for personal honour ultimately provides the solution. Both situations are capable of interpretation either in terms of the chivalric code or of the personalities of the protagonists and their regard for their own and each other's honour, and since the two conceptions are not mutually exclusive the distinction between them is a matter of emphasis on the part of the author. How such a change of emphasis could alter the whole character of a chivalric romance is demonstrated by Colagrus and Gawain. Whether or not a similar reinterpretation was involved in the case of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the distinctive nature of the alliterative romance in this respect lies in the extent to which chivalric conventions have been neglected in favour of considerations of character and the natural regard for honour.

These two poems alone are sufficient to distinguish the

alliterative romances from others in Middle English as regards the treatment of Chivalry. Though the more conventional alliterative examples conform to the accepted pattern by avoiding the element in their choice of matter or ignoring it as far as possible in their sources, these two authors have selected incidents centered upon a test of conduct in accordance with the governing code of contemporary society. Yet they, too, by interpreting their material in natural rather than formal terms, emphasising character and personal honour rather than obedience to convention, display that realism and interest in the straightforward hero of action which is regarded as characteristic of the English romance in contrast with the roman courtois. But the assumption that this contrast arises from differences of social background between French and English authors and audiences, and the ignorance of the latter in matters of chivalric refinement, cannot apply in these instances: the difference of emphasis, evident in Coleray and Gawayn, possible in the case of Sir Gawayn, must be a matter of deliberate choice arising from a fundamentally different conception of the relation of the chivalric code to its practice in life and of the function of literature in reflecting that relationship with a bias in favour of realism rather than idealism.

Something of the same preference for the reality underlying the social code is apparent in the treatment by alliterative authors of the other dominant convention of Medieval romance, that of Courtly Love. It is frequently asserted that Middle English redactors, where they dealt with love at all, preferred to interpret it as a purely natural emotion, avoiding the artificial conventions of Courtly Love and, in particular, the introspective analyses of feeling associated with the element in

484
the romes romains. Chevaliers Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie avoid the element altogether by selection of story-matter. The exclusion was a simple matter in the latter case, but the later career of the Chevalier au Cygne and his marriage to the daughter of the duchess of Bouillon offered more romantic material, which may explain why the English redactor confined his version to the Naissance, and the childhood of the hero. The emotional basis of his chosen episode is the boy's love of his mother in whose defence he fights, and it is, perhaps, significant that the French author, despite his romanticising of the original folk-tale, has not attempted to reinterpret it, in a familiar Medieval mould, as a knight's defence of his lady's reputation. The interest shown by the alliterative author in the boy's natural feeling for his mother suggests that such a version might not have appealed to his less sophisticated tastes.

It is not, perhaps, without significance that the hero of Guillaume de Palerne also fights in defence of his mother, but here there are other episodes of a more romantic nature, the author having very largely reinterpreted the boy and girl relationship, which must have formed the core of the original folk-tale, in terms of the courtly convention. Their love expresses itself through the familiar literary apparatus of introspective soliloquy and emotional analysis and in the conventional symptoms of physical and mental torment. But this formalised elaboration of the love-element is so localised in extent and so intrusive in nature that it would have been simple and natural for an English redactor to whom it was distasteful to ignore it and restore the emotional content to something resembling its primitive form. Yet the alliterative author has made only minor alterations, designed to

abbreviate the conventional expressions of feeling and give them a more logical development, leading to resolution and action. The love-element in his version is still sufficiently prominent to refute the common assumption of its neglect by English redactors: his efforts to curtail it only appear significant by comparison with his usual fidelity to the source on which he drew. But he was patently ill at ease with the formalised treatment of love, with emotional analysis in particular, and, had he been more self-confident, might well have dispensed with it entirely. That he should have retained it, rather than abandon material which was otherwise congenial to him, suggests that in this respect he was more broad-minded than the general conception of the Middle English redactor would lead us to expect.

Nonetheless, his redaction represents a compromise. A later alliterative poet, the author of Colagrins and Gawain, found a more mature solution to a similar problem. Attracted by an episode in the Perceval-complex in which the influence of amour courtois is marked, he took advantage of the fact that the love-element was localised in extent to omit it entirely, removing every trace from his version. But his attitude to Courtly Love, far from the negative and evasive approach associated with Middle English redactors, was positive and constructive, involving him in a fundamental revision of the episode as a whole. Love is one of the main springs of action in the original, and the lengths to which he has gone in providing a new motivation suggests that his objection to the element was deep-rooted, and could not be overcome by modifying the more extreme manifestations of the courtly convention. We may assume that it was not the artificial expression of amour courtois but its intrusion into an inappropriate sphere, of masculine action and masculine

values, which led him to reinterpret his original on a basis which ignored emotional claims upon the male. In its place he has asserted the claim of honour, which he apparently considered more worthy of his readers' attention, and which was, perhaps, more in accord with the social codes familiar to them.

Whether or not his attitude was shared by the author of Sir Gawain is impossible to determine, but there are certain similarities between their work which may be significant. The Temptation episode in Gawain centers upon the lady's offer of her love to Gawain, an incident which, though unorthodox in motive, might well have been elaborated in terms of the courtly code. There are, in fact, some traces of the convention in Gawain's reflections upon what is due to his own honour and the lady's reputation and his concern not to give offence by an uncourtly rejection of her offer. Whether these represent the full extent of the love-element in his source or are vestiges of an original where the convention found expression in a long duel of love, with reflective soliloquies and evasive speeches on both sides, is impossible to judge. But it is noteworthy that here, as in Colagrins and Gawain, Courtly Love gives place to honour as a motivating force, the hero acting, not in obedience to the courtly convention but, naturally and spontaneously, out of regard for his own reputation and the honour of his host.

Therefore, though the alliterative romances may seem at first sight to conform to the common English pattern in their neglect of Courtly Love, the variety of their reactions to it is significant. Though some alliterative poets avoid the element in their selection of story-matter, the author of William of Malorne grapples with it in full-

blown form, if somewhat unenthusiastically, where he might have avoided it with comparative ease. In Galagrus and Gawain, on the other hand, a redactor whose polish and competence suggest that he was quite capable of appreciating courtly convention, positively rejects it as an ingredient of romance, substituting a less artificial code of conduct. And it is this code which provides the guiding principle in that episode of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight which might feasibly have been interpreted in terms of amour courtois. Neglect of courtly conventions by these alliterative authors implies, not unfamiliarity or apathy, but distaste or positive rejection in favour,--in some instances--, of a more natural and realistic basis for human conduct.

Neglect of the codes of courtly society by the authors of Middle English romance and their preference for the narrative of adventures implies that, preoccupied with incident and action, they ignored the sphere of ideas as a whole, the motivation and moral basis of the events in their sources. In this, as in other respects, the alliterative romances related to the French tradition are too varied to conform to such a generalisation. The closeness with which William of Palerne adheres to its original allows only incidental expression to the redactor's personal interests, but a preference for scenes of natural human emotion is suggested by his extended treatment of those showing the affection between William and his foster-parents and the fidelity of the enchanted prince who, as the werwolf, takes the hero and heroine under his protection. Such expansions are, however, counterbalanced by the omission of passages in which the characters reflect upon their circumstances and the workings of Fate, suggesting that though human overtones to the action interested the English author the element of

ideas made no particular appeal to him and he felt no need to underline the moral of the triumph of innocence and youthful love over the evil forces opposed to them. It follows as a natural corollary that the characterization in his version is purely rudimentary. But this cannot be interpreted as a return on the part of the alliterative redactor to a crude and elementary conception of romance, since the French version also, despite its elaborate analysis of feeling in the love scenes, leaves the characters as undeveloped as those of the original folk-tale must have been.

The author of la Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne, dealing with very similar material, made at least some attempt to assimilate it to human experience by suggesting the bonds of affection between the hero and the other children and the natural feeling which inspired his defence of his mother, and to give the plot greater validity by relating it to a vague moral basis. The alliterative redactor found no space in his abbreviated version for the elaboration of motives or emotion and he ignored the original moral. Yet he apparently felt the need to provide some basis for the action since he attempted to relate it to Christian morality, though his efforts were too perfunctory to have much significance. The naivety of the youthful hero attracted him sufficiently to cause him to include passages of characterization quite out of proportion with his abbreviated account of the action, but he has done nothing to make the narrative more credible than the French version. The author of Joseph of Aramathie has shown equally little interest in extra-narrative details, though here the element of ideas is potentially of much greater importance. The mystic power of the Grail and its influence in the lives of Joseph and his followers and

in their conversion of the first Christian knights provides both moral and motivation in the Estoire, though the religious theme is less thoroughly integrated with the conventional elements of romance than in later sections of the Vulgate Cycle. The alliterative redactor, clearly ill at ease with this mixture of elements, makes little of the association, his preference for adventurous incident and his haphazard attempts to limit and reorder the Grail matter confusing the interrelation of chivalry and mysticism, just as his selection of story-matter prevents the full development of its significance. As a result the Grail has little more than a curiosity value in his redaction. Nor has he added anything to give greater depth to the very rudimentary characterization of the original version. In so far as his redaction succeeds it is, like Chevalere Assigne and William of Palerne, as a romance of action rather than ideas.

By contrast, Colagus and Gawain, despite a lively plot, is primarily concerned with ideas and motives. The redactor's rejection of the codes of aristocratic society as the basis of action has not resulted in a romance of incident devoid of other interests. The chief concern of the redaction, as of the French original, is with conduct, but with conduct upon a natural human basis, inspired not by social conventions but by a concern for personal reputation and a regard for the integrity of others. This emphasis upon natural human behaviour is not merely an accidental result of the redactor's neglect of Chivalry and Courtly Love, but is a deliberate effect produced by his concentration upon character, motivation and the emotional reactions of those involved, which together occupy his attention at greater length than the narration of adventures. And, though his interpretation implies

a natural morality of honesty and self-respect his version is in no sense didactic and makes no pretence of being a moral tale in the manner of Chevaliers Assigne. It was clearly not the redactor's intention to preach but to lend force and conviction to his story by expressing it realistically in terms of the behaviour of credible human beings motivated by familiar emotions and reactions. Character was, therefore, of much greater importance to him than to the author of the original, whose conventional plot is worked out by the familiar lag-figures of chivalric romance in automatic obedience to its social codes. Golagrus and Gawain are motivated by personal integrity and a sense of honour which is rooted in the character of each, and the success of the alliterative poem largely depends upon the extent to which their behaviour, and, to a lesser extent that of Kay and Arthur, can be accepted as a natural expression of personality. The elaborate care with which they have been characterized, by contrast with others, -Gawain with Kay, Golagrus with Arthur-, by what is said of them and by their own lengthy speeches, and by their own attitudes to each other in thought and in action, is responsible to a greater extent than any other element for the contrast between the French and English versions in scale, proportion and method of presentation.

Whatever may have been the case in its original, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight presents essentially the same realistic interpretation of romance matter on the basis of character and natural human reactions. The chief interest of the alliterative work lies in the hero's behaviour in the various situations which confront him, and the virtual absence of the conventional codes of conduct need not imply that it is a mechanical romance of incident only. Here, again, it is

Gawain's response to the claims of self-respect and duty towards others which provides the motivation and the moral basis of the action. But, despite the attention given to religion, in the observance of ceremonies as in the hero's prayers and concern to fulfil his Christian duties, the redactor clearly had no intention of preaching a Christian moral in romance form, or, indeed, of giving a didactic significance to any of the adventures he retails. His interest was in character and conduct for their own sake, and not in idealised perfection, but in natural and credible manifestations of human nature: the minor features in which Gawain falls short of the standards at which he aims lend greater conviction to his story than is generally achieved by French romances, whose knightly heroes are flawless in their practice of the chivalric codes. The alliterative redactor has accepted the traditional conception of Gawain as the basis of his characterisation, and makes use of such conventions as the ceremonial of arming the knight and the explanation of his heraldic bearing to convey it effectively. But it is the multitude of minor touches, fresh and original, which lend unusual depth and conviction to the character of the hero: the unforced simplicity of his piety, the courtesy of his attitude towards others, the convincing reality of his mental conflicts in deciding between honour and safety and in controlling his fear, and, above all, his sense of shame in his failure. These and the many incidental touches which make credible the character of Sir Bercilak, - in both his manifestations, - and of his lady, play a major part in the success of the alliterative romance. Whether such characterisation derived from a French original cannot be proven, but neither the rudimentary and formal treatment of character in the romans courtois nor the nature of the examples to which Sir

Gawayn has been related makes it at all probable, while the example of Golagrus and Gawayn may suggest the lengths to which an alliterative author might deviate from his source in characterizing the persons of the romance, as a means of giving added force and reality to the concepts with which it dealt.

The unusual degree of realism attained by these two alliterative romances has been achieved without that neglect of character and motivation, and consequent loss of depth and subtlety, which is usually associated with Middle English redactions as a natural result of their rejection of the ideals underlying the social codes reflected by their French originals. It must, however, be admitted that in this respect they are also distinguished from the other alliterative romances considered here, in which character, motivation and moral considerations have received little or no attention. And this is only one of several features in which the two Gawayn poems share common characteristics which set them apart from the others grouped with them.

The nature of their story-telling makes a distinction between them in one important matter, however. The instance of Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight suggests that for some Medieval romance-writers at least there was no essential incongruity in the realistic treatment of story-matter in which the plot was controlled by supernatural agencies. Everything in Sir Gawayn indicates that, just as the author's concern was not primarily with incident but with conduct, so his interest in the supernatural was not for its own sake but for its contribution to situations which provoked interesting human reactions. He has not attempted, for example, to rationalise the role of the Green Knight, but by painstaking and detailed presentation on the physical plane and by

natural and forceful characterization to make him acceptable on the same realistic level as the human characters. His success in this respect contrasts with the unsatisfactory passage in which he attempts to explain the supernatural interventions by attributing them to the enmity of Morgan la Fay, an unconvincing motive which, if it originated with him, may indicate his embarrassment with an element which conflicted with his realistic conception and rational motivation of the romance as a whole. In other respects his treatment accords with the practice of the most sophisticated French romance-writers, who assimilated the supernatural elements in their traditional story-matter to the somewhat heightened realism with which they presented the social background, without allowing it to obtrude upon their preoccupation with the codes of Chivalry and Courtly Love. But where their approach was largely negative, describing the operation of supernatural forces without attempting to explain their origin or to make them credible in physical terms, the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has contrived to make the Green Knight contribute positively to the atmosphere and effect of his poem, not merely to the development of the plot.

Sir Gawain is distinctive in this respect not only by comparison with the romans courtois but with other romances in Middle English, including those in alliterative verse. Golagrus and Gawain excludes the supernatural completely. It seems unlikely that a redactor whose preference for the natural and realistic made him intolerant of the conventional motivation of his original would have tolerated the intervention of such a character as the Green Knight, and it may well be that his choice of an episode which moves entirely on a human and comprehensible plane indicates his tastes in this respect. The other

alliterative authors, however, accept such interventions without apparent difficulty. In the case of Joseph of Aramathie and of Chevalere Assigne their attitude is perfectly natural since, in these instances, they are concerned with the operation, within a Christian context, of divine agencies which aid the powers of Right against those of Evil. In an age of faith such manifestations of supernatural power required neither motivation nor explanation, and neither the French authors, nor their alliterative successors, made any attempt to rationalise them or bring them into harmony with the natural world in which they operate. The interest of both redactors and original authors was, apparently, absorbed by the physical forms in which the supernatural manifests itself, and their uncritical approach is reminiscent of the unquestioning acceptance of this element, both Christian and non-Christian in association, in Medieval folk-lore. In Chevalere Assigne the magic machinery of a folk-lore plot has been made acceptable in Christian terms, yet the sophisticated author of Guillaume de Palerne apparently found nothing incongruous in using such folk-matter, with its basic element of enchantment, as the theme of a realistic novel of contemporary life. The alliterative redactor cannot be considered less sophisticated merely because he adopts such an element, without attempting to rationalise it, though his attribution of magic powers to Alis-aundrine may suggest that he was sufficiently naïf to welcome it for its own sake.

So far, therefore, as the supernatural element is concerned it would be artificial to attempt a distinction between French and English romances, since many French authors accept it at its face value as something in harmony with the world in which it operates. Only

those who are not merely content to reflect the surface of life in the roman courtois try to modify this disruptive, irrational element in their story-matter, and it is generally assumed that English redactors, less serious in purpose, were also less conscious of incongruity in this respect. Most of the alliterative romances considered here reflect the uncritical approach of such authors, French as well as English. But the example of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight may suggest that an alliterative author might be no less sensitive to the conflict between realistic presentation and supernatural machinery than the most sophisticated of French writers and even more subtle and inventive in reconciling the two elements.

In the most mature of the romans courtois the element of description plays a major part in bringing the fantastic story-matter into harmony with those aspects of contemporary life for whose discussion and analysis it provides the framework. By detailed description and vivid evocation of the physical background of contemporary society French authors hoped to make it easier for readers familiar with that society to accept their narratives, however bizarre, as having greater validity than their inherent interest could give them. As with many other elements in the romance, such descriptions quickly became formalised as set-pieces in which the author could display his descriptive skill and which the audience could appreciate for their own sake. For both purposes, associative and evocative, a heightened realism was employed, in which elaboration of detail and excessive richness harmonize with the general idealization of life in the romances. The general assumption that the Middle English romances were intended for a popular audience unfamiliar with the social sphere

described in the romans courtois, implies that redactors would reject the greater part of such material in their sources without supplying a social setting more appropriate to those for whom they wrote.

This is, in effect, one of the features in which the author of William of Palerne has deviated from plodding fidelity to his French original, in order to eliminate much of the descriptive matter there. His approach is, however, by no means so radical as the generalization upon Middle English redactors would suggest: though he omits certain descriptions entirely, and abbreviates others, he generally retains those dealing with ceremonies and even expands slightly those of gardens and natural settings. The descriptive passages in his work are, for the most part spiritless and ineffective, and the frequency with which he excuses his abbreviation of the original by pretending lack of space or ability suggests that where he reproduced such descriptions it was from a sense of duty rather than personal appreciation of their value. The authors of Chevalere Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie were less scrupulous. Yet the latter, despite the freedom with which he treated the Estoire and his conformity in omitting and abbreviating many of its descriptive passages, has been typically inconsistent in retaining others and attempting one brief, independent contribution. It is significant, however, that the French text is less closely related to contemporary life in its social setting than most romances and the descriptions reproduced by the alliterative redactor have a practical rather than an evocative function, while his own contribution relates to the action of a battle-scene. In Chevalere Assigne the vernacular of courtly life which the French author had applied to the folk-tale has very largely been ignored, even though in descriptive features it was

both very general and very limited in extent. The redactor's omissions and abbreviations are, however, so much in keeping with his general treatment of the original as to suggest that he was more concerned to achieve a brief narrative outline than to alter a social setting which might prove unfamiliar to his readers.

These three redactors are essentially negative in their attitude to descriptive detail. By contrast the author of Golagrus and Gawain is both positive and highly individual in his approach, and his treatment of the element differs radically from that in his French source. The original author, taking for granted his readers' familiarity with aristocratic society, established his story in a setting appropriate to it, not by the insertion of descriptive set-pieces but by frequent allusion to details of dress, settings and ceremonials, dispersed here and there in his articulate prose narrative. The effect is cumulative and suggestive rather than minutely detailed. The rigidity of alliterative verse in a rhymed stanzaic form prohibited the reproduction of such an effect, and the alliterative redactor was faced with the alternative of abandoning the social setting or creating his own method of evoking it. This he has done by devoting set passages to the minute description of combat, of armour, of settings and feasts, piling detail upon detail with an inventive freedom and a heightened realism of effect which exceeds anything to be found in his source. Had he confined himself to the element on which he has expended most effort,--description of combat--, it might have suggested that he was concerned with action rather than the evocation of social setting, but the purely descriptive passages in his work, though more limited, are sufficient to show that the trappings of aristocratic life were as essential to his conception

of romance as to that of the authors of romans courtois

Whatever the nature of his source, the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight clearly held the same conception in this respect. Everything in his romance suggests pleasure in and perfect familiarity with the physical background and social usages of the most refined, courtly life of the Fourteenth century. Like the redactor of Colagrins and Gawain he, too, has compiled descriptive set-pieces by the accumulation of numerous details designed to contribute to an overall effect of heightened realism and richness, and though these are not inserted merely to evoke the social milieu but to create atmosphere and assist in characterization, they are, perhaps, the least important part of the total descriptive content. Much more important are the numerous incidental allusions and minor details, which, subtly interrelated, cumulate in an imaginative effect from which the romance derives unusual depth and realism and attains a unique fusion of fantastic story-matter and concrete social setting. Many commentators are prepared to grant that the alliterative poet may have been responsible for the descriptive set-pieces, yet the unique character of Sir Gawain depends very largely upon the deployment of descriptive detail in a way which is unmatched in French romance and which, if it did not originate with the English author, must imply extreme care on his part to preserve and reproduce it. In either case neither this poem, nor Colagrins and Gawain, will support the conception that English authors were less imaginative in their control of descriptive detail and less sophisticated in their view of contemporary society than the authors of the romans courtois.

The contrast between the two Gawain poems and the other alliterative romances in this as in other respects suggests the inadequacy

of any generalisation applied to them as a group. Such generalisations, referring to the Middle English romances as a whole, assume that redactors worked along uniform lines, with the same general purpose in view and influenced by similar preferences and prejudices. Yet even in the technical conduct of their redactions these alliterative authors display a variety of working methods which indicates that, whatever the results, the redactive process was by no means so uniform as the common conception suggests. The example of William of Palerne, the least independent of the alliterative redactors, shows that these English authors at least were never entirely passive in their approach to French originals. In this instance, though the redactor implicitly approves the technical conduct of the original version, he has made some sporadic attempts to modify the structure by transposing passages within limited contexts in order to achieve a more logical sequence of events. Elsewhere he has omitted incidental episodes which delay the outcome of the action, though he shows nothing of that desire to shorten his task by wholesale excisions with which English redactors are frequently credited. Indeed, his most obvious concern in the technical conduct of the redaction has been to ensure that the narrative lost nothing in clarity or continuity, by avoiding abrupt changes of scene and subject, by adding summaries of speeches and filling out allusions to earlier incidents, and creating links between scenes where the French does not provide for the transition. As the original author was himself unusually meticulous in such matters the effect has been to make the alliterative narrator appear obtrusive and over-emphatic. This may suggest a somewhat self-conscious redactor who mistrusted his 'prontice hand', but it certainly does not confirm the conception of the author of

Middle English romance as slavishly reliant upon the ~~constructive~~ abilities of his French predecessor and content merely to shorten his labour by drastic omission and abbreviation wherever possible.

The example of Chaucer's Retelling, on the other hand, may suggest that even such a process of abbreviation might entail considerable effort and care on the part of the redactor. The precise degree of abbreviation involved here cannot be determined, but it was clearly achieved by a deliberate policy of condensation, not merely by verbal economy and haphazard omission of material. Such ~~omissions~~ and abbreviations as there have been were possible only because the alliterative redactor went to considerable trouble to compensate for their loss by creating a new narrative sequence, ensuring the continuity of the action and suppressing subsidiary episodes for the benefit of the main plot. Although the results are extremely mixed, sometimes more effective than the original, yet often involving failings of the kind the redaction was designed to overcome, the author's good intentions are apparent throughout. His abbreviations also, though they often involve the loss of important details, suggest some attempt to discriminate between essentials and incidentals. Technically the redaction as a whole is erratic, uneven and often careless in execution, yet it is not without signs of enterprise on the part of the alliterative poet.

Joseph of Aramathie suggests a similar approach to the technical problems of redaction, neither slavishly dependent upon the French model nor entirely haphazard. And if the result in this instance is even more confused and unsatisfactory much must be allowed for the more difficult nature of the original, with its rambling narrative sequence and intermingling of episodes upon two distinct planes.

Though the redactor appears to have wavered irresolutely between pedestrian reproduction of his original and sporadic attempts to abbreviate it, something of a general principle of redaction is evident in his efforts to achieve a clear-cut narrative outline. Realising the disruptive effect in his brief version of abrupt breaks in sequence and changes of scene, he has attempted to modify it by transposing whole sections of narrative in order to bring together related incidents and allow the action to develop logically. All too often, however, his efforts have created just those defects which he sought to remove. These and similar inconsistencies in the degree of abbreviation, factual errors and signs of carelessness, have marred the alliterative redaction, yet the basic conception is not without merit, suggesting a bold attempt to grapple individually and creatively with the French text.

Though these three redactors were clearly not without resource, their technical ability was inadequate for the function they undertook. Gelagrus and Gawain, by contrast, demonstrates an even more fundamental process of redaction carried out with a large measure of success. And in this instance the technical changes involved are not incidental to the abbreviation or structural amendment of the original, but are the means by which an entirely new interpretation, affecting every aspect of form and content, is expressed. The author's distinctive conception of romance form involved him in major structural alterations, in separating his chosen episode from its original context and in linking together two incidents very different in proportion and in importance. His rejection of the social convention underlying one prominent episode required him to compensate for its omission in his revised design. Only a redactor who was prepared to shape his version

independently and creatively could have contemplated such a fundamental reinterpretation. Despite his independent approach he has not hesitated to make use of the original machinery,—such as the journey of Arthur's court which serves to link separate adventures—,where it was valid for his purpose. His treatment of the selected incidents varies in fullness and intensity,not according to their prominence in the French text,where their intrinsic interest has clearly been the primary consideration,but in relation to their importance in the unified theme of his romance. In narration he has frequently neglected the detailed fullness of the French version in favour of a simplified outline,interspersed with lengthy passages which build up the moral pattern of the romance,express character and create atmosphere without advancing the action. The result is much less coherent than the original,erratic in movement and occasionally uncertain in reference,yet much more forceful and compelling and well suited to the redactor's personal conception of romance.

Though it employs a somewhat different method of narration,Sir Gawain and the Green Knight displays the same happy relationship between subject-matter and means of expression. But where Colagrins and Gawain is broadly outlined in black and white,Sir Gawain is fully coloured and richly detailed. Without immediate knowledge of its source the technical conduct of the redaction,if redaction it is,can only be guessed at,yet the contrast with French romance and the other alliterative texts is illuminating. Apart from an apparent vagueness in motivation at one point,which may be intentional,and a certain perfunctoriness in rounding off the story,Sir Gawain exhibits none of those signs of technical contrivance which are evident in the other

alliterative redactions: abrupt transitions, unevenness of narrative texture, imbalance of narration, description and characterisation.

This does not merely mean that the author was sufficiently master of his craft to avoid the errors made in Chevalere issaigne and Joseph of Aramathie, but that he achieved a method of expression as appropriate to the complexity of his matter, with its interdependence of incident and atmosphere, psychological subtlety and overtones of meaning, as the clear-cut construction of Colagrus and Gawain to its more straightforward and elementary interpretation of romance. Indeed, his control of detail, of characterisation, description of settings and evocation of atmosphere in relation to the advancing action has all the flexibility of the French prose romances without their looseness of form. Yet subjectively it is difficult to feel that Sir Gawain is no more than a literal reproduction, in technique as in matter, of such a French romance: the limited scope of the alliterative poem would alone be sufficient to throw doubt on such a conception, and the technical conduct of the redaction has been designed in relation to the balance between scale and subject-matter. Technical control plays a greater part in the success of Sir Gawain than is usual in Medieval romance, and whoever was responsible for it must be accounted more than a mechanical redactor of other men's creations.

In the last analysis, however, the only component of Sir Gawain which can objectively be attributed to the English poet is the alliterative verse in which it is expressed. The skill with which the medium has been handled, the relation of the variable verse paragraphs to the movement of the story, the emphatic application of the 'bob and wheel', the flexible adaptation of the line to narration, description

and the subtle implications of courtly conversation, though they indicate poetic maturity do not necessarily imply powers of construction, narrative control, or psychological penetration. But, on the other hand, the absence of any conflict between matter and poetic form, of any indication that the redactor was hampered by the relative inflexibility of his medium, would suggest uniform control of both content and means of expression. The very complexity of Sir Gawain implies a particularly intimate connection between matter and medium: the movement of the alliterative line, the location of its emphatic stress, even the nature of the vocabulary it involves, affect the selection and combination of details, the prominence given to them, even their colour and significance. Yet this is a romance in which matters of detail are of paramount importance, and in so far as the alliterative poet was responsible for adapting his medium to make them fully effective, his part in the creation of Sir Gawain must be considered more fundamental than that of a mere translator.

The extent of his artistic control and the measure of his success are indicated by the relation between matter and medium in Colagrass and Gawain, whose redactor, using a French prose romance of the type which might feasibly have supplied the original of Sir Gawain, was forced by his complicated alliterative stanza to adopt a style of expression utterly different from that of his model. It is true that the most sweeping changes affected by the author of Colagrass and Gawain in the matter of the Perceval continuation are due, not to incompatibility of styles, but to a difference of taste and temperament, yet the nature of the alliterative medium forced him to adopt a method of expression much more in keeping with his conception of romance than

the somewhat characterless prose of the original could have been. The rigidity of the rhymed alliterative stanza, restricting direct narration to the minimum, compelled the poet to concentrate upon evocative description of both settings and action, and rhetorical expression of feelings and attitudes. Had it not been that these were aspects of romance which interested him personally such a medium could only have been restrictive and frustrating, and we may therefore presume that its choice was a deliberate one. That he realised its merits is apparent in the lengthy speeches and the even longer descriptions of combat in which he has exploited its emphasis and rhetorical effect to create the most original and successful passages in his poem. For this alliterative redactor at least choice of medium was not a secondary consideration but one fundamentally related to his purpose as a whole.

The form of the alliterative medium chosen by the other redactors was less rigid and exercised a less positive control upon them. Its inhibiting influence is most apparent in William of Palerne, where, in attempting to reproduce his original verbally, the redactor fell, almost inevitably, into a verbose and inflated style, over-emphatic in its statement of inconsequential details, more clumsy and slow-moving than the French narrative. But by its very nature it forced upon the timid English poet a degree of verbal independence through which something of his own personality has found expression. It is suggested by colloquial overtones in the alliterative version, which, in contrast with the refined matter of the courtly episodes and the love scenes, produce a humorous effect which was, perhaps, unintentional. Such a form of expression is perfectly in keeping with the basic folk-lore element

in William of Palerne, but its use was probably dictated by familiarity rather than by consciousness of its suitability for the purpose in hand. The alliterative line was the redactor's natural medium of expression, in which he struggled with his source matter without having the courage, or, perhaps, the ability, to adapt the one to the other, as the authors of the two Gawain romances appear to have done.

Both Chevalere Assigne and Joseph of Aramathie suggest a similar conclusion: for their authors the use of an alliterative medium was axiomatic, while its suitability to their chosen subject-matter was largely irrelevant. In the former instance the result is much as in William of Palerne, despite greater independence in narration. Where the redaction can be closely compared with its original it is apparent that the poet's selection of alliterative terms has introduced incongruous overtones quite out of keeping with the general purport and atmosphere of the passage. Here at least there are no scenes of Courtly Love to be mangled, and the naivety of the boyish hero is well-suited to the gauche expression it receives. But, apart from some slight expansion of those scenes in which it can be so used, the poet has given no sign that he appreciated the qualities of his medium. The author of Joseph of Aramathie exploits one facet of alliterative verse in a single brief passage describing the violence of conflict, but though the material of the Estoire offered him ample opportunity to repeat the effect he has not responded. Consequently the chivalric adventures in his romance have none of the effectiveness given to such incidents in Colagrus and Gawain, and the incongruity of the medium in the religious episodes is without compensation. The choice of an alliterative verse-form for the treatment of such material can only have

been arbitrary. That this redactor, like those of Chavalere Assigne and William of Palerne, should have been prepared to struggle with such a difficult medium in a context where it could not be fully rewarding must suggest that its choice, even though largely passive and negative, was strongly compulsive. That authors of such individuality, independence and ability as those who produced Golagrus and Gawain and Sir Ewain and the Green Knight should use it with such effect may equally well suggest that it was deliberately chosen and exploited as the medium most appropriate to their conception of romance and the redactive process.

The significance of alliterative verse as the medium of redactions drawn from French sources lies in the extent to which it must differ from the original medium, whether prose or verse. The technical demands of the form not only preclude literal translation but compel the poet to adopt a style of expression and a method of narration which will not conflict with the movement of the verse and which, if he is skilful, may exploit it effectively. This is not to imply that English redactors using other media are not faced with similar problems, but even in the comparatively simple blank-verse form the difficulties of alliteration are such as to constitute a real distinction in degree. The rigidity of the verse, its tendency to fall into single-line units and the difficulty of linking these in natural sequence, inhibit its use in detailed and connected narrative and in conversational exchanges, while its inherent suitability for cumulative description, rhetorical expression and the evocation of violent action may be frustrated by the nature of the source-matter. Alliterative poets must therefore go to greater lengths than redactors working in

more pliant media, either to modify the defects of their chosen medium or to exploit its special qualities. This implies greater personal effort and a more positive contribution on their part than Middle English redactors are normally credited with: to a greater or lesser degree they are forced to re-think and re-create the material with which they deal, sometimes only at a verbal level, often more fundamentally in matters of construction, narrative sequence, motivation and even general interpretation. And the more complex the form of alliterative verse employed the more profound the personal contribution involved.

The alliterative redactors of French romance have responded in various ways to the problems presented by their medium in the treatment of their chosen subject-matter, and have reflected the interests of their audiences and expressed their own tastes with varying degrees of freedom and individuality. The nature of the redactive process in their hands and the conception of the romance expressed through it differentiate their works from the romans courtois and, to a lesser extent, from other Middle English redactions in the same form. Most significant, perhaps, in contrast with the general conception of English romances upon French originals, is the variety of the process involved, the range of tastes and interests reflected, and the extremes of creative ability demonstrated within the small group of texts considered here. And, though the uncertain dating of the texts renders such a suggestion hypothetical, there is evidence of a striking development of maturity and creative control amongst the alliterative redactors whose work is represented.

If William of Palerne can be taken to represent the most

primitive and least original of the alliterative redactions it cannot, nonetheless, be classed with those Middle English romances from French sources upon which the common conception of the native audience has been based. It shows none of that desire for radical abbreviation, for the isolation of a bare narrative of adventures, and very little of the antipathy for Chivalry and Courtly Love associated with the popular English audience. Though it is true that the chosen subject was essentially popular in appeal, the redactor has done comparatively little to free it from the courtly mould in which he found it, or to excise details of social setting, characterization and emotion in the interests of brevity. Certain indications of impatience with such elements suggest that they were not entirely to his liking, but as he laboured to reproduce his original as an integral whole we must assume that he wrote for an audience with the leisure to enjoy and the perception to appreciate much that was designed for the tastes of courtly French readers. The timid and negative nature of his redaction may reflect a passive and undemanding audience of middle class background, but with some pretensions to appreciate, at second hand, the literature of their social superiors, but not the ale-house listeners commonly associated with English romance, who were intolerant of everything save the recital of adventures.

Of the alliterative romances only Chevalere Insigne really suggests such a popular audience. The redactor's choice of an incident ultimately derived from folk-literature, his abbreviation of it, favouring narrative incident at the expense of background detail which, in the original, lends conviction to the improbable plot, and his avoidance of the limited chivalric content, conform to the general conception of

popular tastes and interests. Yet the contrast between the redaction and its source is not so extreme as such a summary might imply: the French author had added only a thin veneer of romanticism to the original folk-tale so that the redactor's neglect of the chivalric and courtly elements did not affect the fundamental appeal of the episode. Despite the fantastic plot it is clear that for both authors this lay in the behaviour of the hero, and even in his concentration upon action and adventure the alliterative poet has not entirely neglected details of character and emotional reaction. However popular his audience may have been, its preference for narrative incident did not deter it from appreciating the human appeal of the story, though it no doubt dictated the predominance of narration over description and characterization. The significance of Chevalere Assigne lies in the fact that in order to adjust the balance of components to the taste of an English audience the redactor was prepared to go to much greater lengths and to rely more implicitly upon his own judgement than the author of William of Palerno. The latter also selected story-matter of much human appeal, but though this clearly appealed to him he made only tentative and limited efforts to discriminate in its favour. The author of Chevalere Assigne, influenced, perhaps, by the requirements of an audience lower in the social scale, whose tastes differed more radically from those of French readers, and similarly conditioned by his alliterative medium, attempted a much more original and independent redaction, aiming at structural alteration, change of emphasis and, to a limited extent, at reinterpretation of his source. The fact that his redaction is largely unsuccessful, erratic in degree of abbreviation, unbalanced in proportion and confused in aim, does not disguise its ambitious nature

or the extent to which, in terms of creative originality, it surpasses William of Palerne. Despite its imperfections it suggests the work of a redactor who accepted a measure of creative responsibility and the existence of an English audience, whose tastes, however crude, were not modelled in imitation of those of their social superiors.

Joseph of Arimathe in its turn represents a certain advance upon Chevalere Assigne, not in terms of total achievement but in the ambition of the project which it represents. Its author, also, accepted the challenge of alliterative verse by undertaking to re-plan and re-express his original, though he gives only one brief indication that he realised the potentialities of the medium itself. The results of his independence are equally sweeping, and, if anything, more unfortunate. Many of the technical measures involved were well conceived but vitiated by the lack of an over-all plan of redaction, the failure to make a clear-cut choice between the disparate components of the original, the significance of whose association could not be fully developed within the limited section taken from the Estoire, and by the negative attitude of the redactor to much of the material in his source as to its central theme. His discrimination in favour of military adventures and the narrative of action, the degree of abbreviation employed and the neglect of chivalric details as of the descriptive element, conform to the general conception of the English redaction designed for a popular audience. Yet the very fact that the alliterative poet should have selected such an original as the Estoire del saint Graal argues against the familiar generalisation. That he should have approached it, not in the spirit of the author of Chevalere Assigne, as a quarry from which to hack an episode of obvious popular appeal, but with the

intention of giving an integral account of its contents, mystic as well as adventurous, suggests that he had in mind a somewhat more sophisticated audience. That his project proved abortive, that he failed to convey the full significance of his chosen matter, which apparently conflicted with his essentially realistic conception of romance, and that he abandoned it inconclusively, only serve to underline the ambitious nature of his original project.

By comparison the highly finished and successful Colagrue and Gawain represents a great advance on the part of alliterative redactors, both technically and creatively. Much of the author's individual and creative approach to his function may be attributed not merely to the comparative lateness of his work but to the complicated and demanding form of alliterative verse chosen by him. Since the nature of the medium required that the technical conduct of the redaction must differ radically from that of the original, his choice would seem to imply that he was prepared to undertake a fundamental reinterpretation of the work as a whole. Many of the changes which he has introduced may merely reflect his desire to accommodate the matter to the exigencies of his medium, but others suggest a deliberate and well-planned attempt to exploit the merits of alliterative verse as a means of giving effective expression to his conception of romance. Yet though the distinctive character of Colagrue and Gawain, the emphatic expression of its rhetorical passages, and the vividness of its minutely detailed battle-scenes, are largely due to the skill with which the inherent qualities of the alliterative medium have been exploited, they represent only a minor part of the English redactor's contribution. His conception of his function implies the deletion of fundamental features of

the original, including the element of Courtly Love as a whole and the formal aspects of Chivalry, involving as a result the alteration of the basic motivation of the romance. Such a conception suggests the negative attitude attributed to the ordinary English redactor and his suppression of everything in his source likely to prove unfamiliar to a popular audience. But what survives in Golagrus and Gawain is not merely the narrative outline of the original but its essential subject reinterpreted in terms of a natural morality and natural human relations. The redactor's positive contribution in matters of motivation and characterization quite outweighs his rejection of certain elements in his source and amounts to a fundamental reinterpretation on a basis which is essentially realistic. His interest lay not in the demonstration of social codes but in human behaviour as such, and, since so much else has been altered beyond recognition, we may assume that it was the potential human interest of the basic situation in the original episode which he expected to appeal to his audience. His treatment of it does not, however, suggest the vulgarization usually associated with Middle English redactors but rather a preoccupation with the fundamental ideals of contemporary aristocratic society which transcends the conventions in which the authors of romans courtois were accustomed to express them. In his work the realistic approach to romance matter, which appears in embryonic form in the earlier alliterative romances, is fully developed and its effect is evident in every aspect of the redaction. Yet clearly it is not the realism of the limited imagination, but of sophisticated readers familiar with the usages of refined society, who require from the poet who serves them not only high technical competence but the ability to reinterpret the matter of French romance in terms of their

own conception of life and their realistic evaluation of the conventions underlying it.

If Golagrus and Gawain in relation to the earlier alliterative romances suggests a process of evolution in which English authors gradually acquired independence and competence in reshaping their French sources technically and thematically, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, despite its date of composition, would seem to be the logical apotheosis of such a process. All the characteristics which distinguish Golagrus and Gawain from its French original are seen here in still more refined forms. The technical control which achieved the clear-cut outline of the one is seen to a more perfect degree in the balanced proportions, smooth development and subtle interrelation of narration, description and characterization in the other. The restraints imposed by the alliterative medium, which are still apparent in Golagrus and Gawain, have been overcome and the expressive powers of the verse are fully at the poet's command. More important, however, than this perfection of technique is the advance which Sir Gawain represents in the realistic presentation of romance matter and the realistic interpretation of contemporary life through it. Despite the fantastic nature of the plot the poet compels belief by the vividness with which he brings the situations involved to life, by his concrete presentation of the real and the supernatural alike, and by the extent to which his evocation of personality and analysis of natural human reactions carries conviction. Here, as in Golagrus and Gawain, concentration upon the fundamental roots of human behaviour, character and loyalty to a natural code of honour, implies rejection rather than ignorance of the conventions which dominate the roman courtois: everything in the poem, from its detailed presentation

of the courtly setting to its assumption of the reader's familiarity with courtly usage, indicates that it was intended for an aristocratic audience. Under these circumstances the fact that Sir Gawain can neither be shown to be the product of a similar redemptive process nor accepted as an original creation is particularly frustrating. Yet, whatever the process of composition may have been this poem, more than any other Middle English romance is thoroughly rooted in the tradition of the roman courtois, and it may not be unjustified to attribute its wide deviation from that tradition to the same factors which caused alliterative redactors to make similar, if more limited, deviations not only from the practice of French authors but from that of their Middle English contemporaries.



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The following abbreviations are employed in the Bibliography and throughout the thesis:-

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Archiv: Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen,
Elberfeld and Iserlohn, 1846-, Braunschweig, 1849- .

C.U.P.: Cambridge University Press.

E.E.T.S.: Publications of the Early English Text Society, Original Series, London, 1864- .

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